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A MISCELLANY

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A MISCELLANY

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PREFACE

I BEG to offer my thanks for leave given to reprint the following papers in this volume: to the British Academy for *Coriolanus*: to the Manchester University Press for *English Poetry and German Philosophy*: to the Liverpool University Press for *Coleridge's Use of Light and Colour*: to the editor of *The John Keats Memorial Volume* for *Keats and Philosophy*: to the editor of *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare* for *Feste the Jester*.

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THE REACTION AGAINST TENNYSON [1]

When he died, in 1870, Dickens was still at the height of his fame. The public idolized him, and critical readers, though they had a good deal to say against him, did not question his greatness. Some twenty years later, however, a decided change was visible, chiefly among such readers and especially among the younger men of letters. It was more than a cooling of enthusiasm: it was a strong reaction. Certain defects of the novelist were keenly felt, and all the more keenly because it seemed that his immense popularity had been largely due to them. To decry Dickens, even to protest that you could not read him, became a fashion and a mark of being up to date. And in this reaction two curious traits might be noticed. One was the belief that Dickens's faults were a new discovery and had never been suspected in his lifetime. The other was still stranger, and much more important. The dislike of his faults appeared often to kill the power of perceiving and enjoying his virtues. Because you could not abide

[1] A lecture first given to members of the English Association in 1914.

the death of Paul Dombey or Little Nell, you listened to Sam Weller and Mrs. Gamp without a smile.

This was the nadir of Dickens's star. After a time it rose again. The wholesome work of reaction was finished. In the more literary sections of the public, and among men of letters, there is now a fairly general agreement about him. His defects are simply taken for granted ; but his astonishing genius is fully recognized, and his almost inexhaustible creations are as keenly enjoyed as they were fifty years ago. The best critique of his works written in the first decade of this century came, not from an old stager, but from Mr. Chesterton. And now, if you are unable to read Dickens and yet wish to be in the literary swim, you must either hold your tongue about him or tell lies about yourself.

This story, down to a certain stage in it, has exactly repeated itself in the case of Tennyson—a writer less astonishing in genius and much less faulty in art. At the time of his death, nearly a quarter of a century ago, he was immensely popular ; and of a large part of the public it may fairly be said that it did not recognize his weaknesses and even liked them. After a while, in small circles, the reaction began, and it has spread, and, so far as it has spread, is now intense. The nadir of his fame may not quite be reached, but it can hardly be far off. To care for his poetry is to be old-fashioned, and to belittle it is to be in the movement. And those curious traits of the Dickens

reaction have reappeared, the first of them in a more amusing shape. The mid-Victorian, a figure amply proving the creative energy of Georgian imagination, is supposed to have been blind to Tennyson's defects, though the actual surviving mid-Victorian rarely hears a sane word about them which was not familiar to him in his youth. And—what really matters—the antipathy to these defects seems in some cases to have so atrophied the power of enjoyment that Tennyson's weakest poems and his best meet with the same indifference or contempt, and a reader will remain unmoved by lines which, if he were ignorant of their authorship, he would hail with delight.

The loss of such delight is a heavy one, and ingratitude is not a pretty vice; but otherwise the reaction against Tennyson is not, on the whole, a matter for regret. It was necessary, for one thing, in the interests of poetry itself. For the formal characteristics of his style were easily caught, and Tennysonian minor poetry, if less absurd than Byronic minor poetry, was quite as sickening; so that those who admire him most can only rejoice that no trace of his influence remains in the poetry of the present day. Besides, his popularity in the last twenty or thirty years of his life made the public unjust to other living poets, and he was over-estimated even by some good critics; and in such cases (George Eliot's is another) some reaction is both natural and wholesome. It hastens, also, that sifting

process to which the works of all poets have to submit (unless, like Sappho's, they are almost all lost). The result of that process is that a part of the works is separated out and continues to be widely read or, as we say, to " live," while the remainder passes more or less from public view and is explored only by lovers of the poet or students of literary history. This has already happened to Tennyson's immediate predecessors, and it is happening to him now. When the process is complete nobody troubles to dwell on the poet's defects, nobody is blinded by them to his merits, and it is possible to form a comparative estimate of his worth. The time for this has not yet come in Tennyson's case, and it will hardly come in my lifetime ; but, if only for your entertainment, I will hazard a brief prophecy. I believe he will be considered the best poet of his own age, though not so much the best as his own age supposed ; and, while I have never thought that in native endowment he was quite the equal of the best of the preceding age, yet the distance, as it seems to me, is not wide ; and, as he was blessed with long life, made (like Pope) the most of his gift, and in a wonderful degree retained and even developed it to the end, I do not doubt that his place will be beside them, and expect that the surviving portion of his work will not be smaller than what survives of theirs. But I am not going to offer reasons for this forecast, or to attempt an account of his merits, and still less to try

to prove them. You cannot prove the merits of Sappho's fragments or of *King Lear* (which Tolstoi thought poor stuff) ; and I should not dream of disputing with some one who is indifferent, say, to *The Lotos-Eaters*. The dispute would end, at best, in nothing, and, at worst, in each of us saying aloud what he only said to himself at the beginning—that his opponent, so far as poetry is concerned, should for ever hold his peace. On the other hand, the reaction, in my view, is by no means wholly unjustified, and I propose later, without constant reference to it, to touch on certain features of Tennyson's poetry which partly justify it. Only first I must refer to what I think mere follies that appear in this reaction ; and I will begin with one or two that are connected with his former immense popularity.

Short poems that are very popular and therefore frequently quoted or mentioned become, as we say, hackneyed ; and then we are in danger of thinking them commonplace. But if a poem is very popular because it is very good, its becoming hackneyed for us is entirely our affair.[1] It remains what it was, but we through our weakness cannot get at it. Our imagination, our feelings, our ears, act so feebly as we read it that what we read is, in fact, not *it*, but a degraded copy of it. Now and then the newspaper critic of a concert may be found complaining that a

[1] Cf. Saintsbury, *History of English Prosody*, vol. iii. p. 210.

Beethoven symphony is hackneyed : but a Beethoven symphony never became hackneyed to Wagner or Brahms, and what is really hackneyed is the critic's mind. And so I have met people who decried as hackneyed "Break, break, break," and *Crossing the Bar*; and doubtless, if they cannot read these poems freshly, they do well not to read them at all. But as for the poems themselves, I think they are as sure of immortality as anything in the language.

"But," some one perhaps will answer, "they are spoilt for me because they have been taken to the heart of the great middle class, with its nauseous sentiment, domestic and religious. One of them—or a misquotation from one of them—is engraved on tombstones, and the other has now been added to *Hymns Ancient and Modern*." Well, these uses of the poems may be fitting or unfitting ; but, however that may be, one does not cease to love daffodils because the public has taken to loving them. And there are two ways of being a slave to the public. One is to be afraid to differ from it, and the other to be afraid to agree with it.

Again, the popularity of a poem may be due in part to its defects ; and then those who see this make sometimes a great mistake and imagine that other poems of the author, also popular and in certain ways resembling the first, have the same defects. For example, the *May Queen* poems used to be extremely popular, and they were so partly for a bad reason.

They contain lovely lines and stanzas; but their pathos, besides being too obvious, is, here and there, sentimental. The same defect appears more or less in other great writers of that day. The best writers of earlier and also of later days are free from it, and it rightly displeases us. But that is no excuse for talking as if the *May Queen* poems were *typical* of Tennyson; and what are we to think of critics who, perceiving that *The Grandmother* also deals with rustic and domestic life, imagine that it has the same defects and is on the same level as the *May Queen* poems? And if, again, in modernizing some of the Arthurian stories, Tennyson did them an injury, it does not follow that in modernizing others he injured them too, or that it is sensible to dismiss the *Idylls of the King* in a lump with contempt.

Let us pass to matters of more weight. The root of the reaction against Tennyson among capable readers of the new generation is, we are told, that his ideas do not appeal to them—neither the more explicit ideas, sometimes called the "philosophy," found in *In Memoriam* and elsewhere, nor the ideas or way of regarding life implicit in many other poems. This is probably true, and, if this were all, there would be little or nothing in the fact to cause surprise or regret. The statement would hold good of the ideas of Carlyle, and, with some modification, of those of Ruskin and Browning. They all permeated, more or less, the minds of several genera-

tions, and, doubtless losing something in the process, became an atmosphere surrounding the mind of the present ; and an atmosphere, however wholesome, cannot well have the charm of novelty. But every generation naturally asks for novelty ; and, further, the ideas and the literature of times immediately preceding its own are apt to be the least interesting of all to it, because they have less novelty for it than those of periods more distant, and may even be felt, as those more distant ideas are not, to be a prison from which it is necessary to escape. This, no doubt, is a wise provision of Nature to ensure progress, and it would be foolish to complain of it, even though its result is that the full meaning of the ideas in question is lost for a time and remains to be re-discovered when they are no longer familiar.

There is little I need say about the attitude of the reaction towards Tennyson's " philosophical " ideas, but I cannot say it without interposing a word of protest. Harm has been done by those who have spoken of his " philosophy," whether to exalt or to belittle it. He was not a philosopher, any more than Wordsworth was, or Browning, or Meredith, though he shows, I think, more signs than they do of the gift that makes a philosopher. And he, like them, is happier when he simply expresses his ideas, with the emotions that accompany them, than when he argues about them, or attempts to systematize them ; happier in *The Ancient Sage* and *The Higher*

Pantheism and certain passionate sections of *In Memoriam* than in certain other sections of that poem, just as Wordsworth is happier in *Tintern Abbey* than in the most analytical passages of *The Prelude*. Coleridge might perhaps have discussed with profit, in prose, the question whether that which Wordsworth found in Nature was found there or put there ; but, even if this question were suitable for verse at all, Wordsworth was not competent to discuss it. Neither Tennyson nor Browning offers, I believe, any argument for personal immortality that had not been stated in preciser terms and more complete connexion by philosophers ; but their passion for this belief made fine poetry, and far more impressive to me than their arguments in support of it is the bare fact (whatever it may point to) that two minds so much superior to my own could make no sense of the world without it.

I come now to the " philosophical " ideas, as distinguished from the arguments, that lay nearest to Tennyson's heart. One of them was that just mentioned. A second was the idea of human progress on the earth—the faith that man, through a process lasting for thousands or millions of years, is developing into something infinitely greater than he was at first, and even that " the whole creation " is moving to " some divine event." Of this second idea I shall say nothing, because, whatever the attitude of the " reaction " may be in regard to it, Tennyson's atti-

tude does not appear to be a source of irritation. The third may be called the idea of God; but it would be better, I think, to call it the idea of the ultimate power, because the main source of Tennyson's interest in this idea seems to me to have lain in its bearing on the other two. The main source, that is to say, was not so much the strictly religious impulse to adore as the need to be satisfied that, since the ultimate power in the universe is clearly not man, this power,

> He, They, One, All; within, without;
> The Power in darkness whom we guess,

is of such a nature as to value highest what man at his best values highest, and therefore to ensure his progress both on earth and elsewhere. And that need, we should observe, was for Tennyson peculiarly imperative. Like his great predecessors, he may be called a poet of Nature, but with a difference. For Wordsworth and Shelley the spirit of Nature, we may roughly say,[1] is wholly beautiful, good, and unhampered, while in man this same spirit is thwarted, and struggles against ugliness and evil; and so Nature is, for them, a promise, and almost a pledge, of man's ultimate victory. But it could not be so for Tennyson. Though he wrote *In Memoriam* before the days of Darwin, he had fully realized and keenly felt the conflict, pain, and waste in Nature;

[1] As regards Shelley the statement is not quite accurate.

so that it presented to him not a solution, but the same problem as man's life, and required the same further guarantee. Then (to look for a moment beyond *In Memoriam*), as years went by, this need became still more insistent, because the advance of science and the theory of evolution (both of which he welcomed) had, however unjustifiably, made materialism a popular magazine-philosophy, and this philosophy again, in Tennyson's view, was in part responsible for moral phenomena which he detested. This was unfortunate for him, partly because it alarmed and exasperated him and touched some of his poetry with the spirit of ephemeral controversy, and partly because it led unwise opponents to regard him as a reactionary, and unwise admirers to make claims for him as a philosophic teacher which he never made for himself.

To return to the reaction. I quite understand that *In Memoriam*, as regards its ideas, cannot appeal to readers now as it did to thousands in the generation before mine, or even in mine or the next after mine. But why *In Memoriam* and other poems, because of these ideas, should lose all interest for those who share in the reaction, I do *not* understand ; and still less how any one can offer the explanation that these ideas, one or all, are so alien to his own that he cannot read the poems with enjoyment or even with patience. That explanation, it seems to me, implies an altogether perverse attitude towards

poetry or, for that matter, any other product of imagination.

I do not mean merely that a reader who is indifferent or hostile to the main ideas used in a poem ought to be able, in spite of this, to enjoy the beauty of its style and music. I mean that, for the time being, he ought to be able to adopt these ideas, to identify himself imaginatively with them, to feel as his own the emotions that accompany them ; and, further, that unless he has done this he cannot fully appreciate the poem or, in the full sense of the word, read it. If, as I read Browning's *Cavalier Tunes*, my Roundhead sympathies prevent my feeling like a Cavalier, how can I read the *Tunes* with any gusto ; and, read without gusto, are they themselves ? Are the Jolly Beggars to me what they are in the poem, if I refuse to be a Jolly Beggar for the moment and insist on remaining a member of a Charity Organization Committee ? And if this holds of poems like these, equally, or if possible even more, it holds of a poem like *In Memoriam*, which is concerned not with a past political conflict or a minor form of free enjoyment, but with something which has been, is, and always must be, the centre of men's doubts, fears, hopes, or convictions about themselves and the world, and which, in a variety of shapes, may even be said to form the ultimate subject of all great philosophies and religions and of most of the greatest poems. In *In Memoriam* it takes a particular shape.

There is a large and beautiful soul—for all who know it, a pre-eminently large and beautiful soul; for them, therefore, something of the highest value: and suddenly, with all its promise unfulfilled, it appears to vanish like the rainbow of a minute, and therefore to have no more value than the rainbow for the ultimate power. Can this be really so? Again: this power, as Job believes, is the friend of the man who tries to do his will; yet Job, who knows—and, for the author of the poem, truly knows—that, imperfect as he is, he has tried with all his heart to do that will, is treated like a defiant rebel: how can this be? Again: God is perfect goodness and power; how is it, then, that Satan and his host exist, and that man, who was made in God's image, has lost his Paradise; and how, once more, that countless images of God appear to walk their way to Purgatory or to Hell? And, whether visibly or no, the same mystery haunts all great tragedy and even great works not tragic. Was ever soul nobler than Antigone's or Othello's; yet what becomes of them? And if Don Quixote's soul was no less noble, why was it the prey of delusions and a butt for vulgar insult? Well, then, when I read the *Book of Job*, the *Divine Comedy*, or the *Antigone*, surely I do not say, "These ideas about God or Zeus or Heaven and Hell are not my ideas and clash with mine, and therefore I cannot enter into them." On the contrary, I do enter into them and feel in them the same problem and the

same passion that belong to my own ideas, truer perhaps than they, but unlikely to be the unveiled truth. And if I did anything else, what would you call me ? Either a man with no literary education, or else a man with a literary education, but—stupid.

We may pass now from what I have called mere follies of the reaction to consider characteristics of Tennyson's poetry which, at any rate in some degree, seem to justify it. And I will begin with the moral content or spirit of the poetry.

This, we hear it said, is conventional. If that charge meant, as it ought to mean, that Tennyson's morality was a thing of use and wont, taken up without personal conviction from the social atmosphere around him, it would be ridiculous. He was himself about as unconventional as a decent citizen can be, and the moral ideas in his poetry are plainly matters of intense conviction. But it is true that there is nothing startling in them, and little that would even be arresting apart from the poems themselves. Here he resembles Dickens and Thackeray rather than Browning and Meredith. Further, the virtues that he cares about most are mainly of one type : self-control, self-sacrifice, faithfulness, loyalty to law and to obligations personal and social, patriotism, and the like. They are not, with Tennyson, ascetic virtues ; but, if we use the slippery antithesis of

order and progress, we may call them the virtues of order.[1] The " moral " of the *Lotos-Eaters* (if under protest we use the word) is that the law of life is labour, and that to reject it is to lose all that makes life worth living and to imagine gods as idle and selfish as yourself. The *Palace of Art* tells us that the self-centred uncreative enjoyment of beauty is poison to the soul ; the *Vision of Sin*, that abandonment to sensual excitement leads to cynicism and incapacity to enjoy anything at all ; *Love and Duty*, that, where these clash, love, even at its best, must give way. The pursuit of the Beatific Vision, we hear in the *Holy Grail*, is for a Galahad or a Percivale here and there ; and the Vision comes to Bors, who could not care to see it unless Lancelot might see it too ; but wellnigh all the Knights, and even the King himself, are here on earth, not to spend their force in seeking it, but to right human wrongs.

The poems which enshrine these ideas certainly do not lack originality, and the significance of the ideas themselves is not easily exhausted ; but of course they do not arrest the reader's attention in at all the same degree as the ideas contained in not a few poems by Browning, Arnold, or Rossetti. Nor do they resemble ideas which are popular now, or at least were

[1] Tennyson would have objected to this. " Progress " for him meant moving upward, working out the beast, the slave of mere instinct and impulse ; and those virtues are fundamental forms of this working out.

popular three years ago.[1] The idea, for instance, that the business of life is to develop one's individuality is foreign to Tennyson, and he would not have been sympathetic towards it, I imagine, even in the rare cases where there is much individuality to develop. Again, there is the view of life as an adventure. It is not, perhaps, a profound view, but unquestionably there are virtues of adventure, and in Tennyson's poetry they hardly get their due. He is not, indeed, unsympathetic here, but he feels strongly the perils of the adventurous temper. "God help me," cries his sailor-boy,

> God help me! save I take my part
> Of danger on the roaring sea,
> A devil rises in my heart
> Far worse than any death to me.

The sailor-lad worked his devil out, or used it up, in that way; and if Tennyson had written the poem later, he would probably have sent him into the Navy. The poor wild youth in *Rizpah* came to a bad end, and Tennyson makes the mother say:

> The king should have made him a soldier; he would have been one of the best.

It is hard, he seems to tell us, for such spirits to find their place in the social order, and yet, if they cannot do so, they are apt to make havoc of their own lives and the lives of others. There are other poems of

[1] [This clause was added when the lecture was re-delivered during the War.]

Tennyson's, no doubt, which breathe the spirit of adventure in a much higher sense of that word: *Ulysses*, for example, or *Merlin and the Gleam*. And the first of these is one of his very best, and the second one of his latest and most personally characteristic. But (though this does not injure the poem) the "idea" in *Ulysses* is adopted from Dante; and neither the adventure in the other poem, nor yet that portrayed in *In Memoriam*, is of the kind that would appeal to the reaction or soften its heart to Tennyson.

There seems to be a notion that Tennyson was from the first popular. In reality it was long before he became so. After the volumes of 1842, no doubt, he was generally regarded by literary readers as the first of living poets; but even those volumes did not make him popular, nor yet did *The Princess*, or *In Memoriam*, or the *Maud* volume. It was the four *Idylls of the King* published in 1859 that opened to him the heart of the public and began that immense popularity which, happily, he never saw diminished. On the other hand, FitzGerald was disappointed with every volume that appeared after 1842, and held that Tennyson never fulfilled the promise of early days; those very *Idylls* of 1859 were a rock of offence to admirers like Swinburne and Meredith; and, to the reaction, the whole collection of the *Idylls*, his most ambitious work, is probably the most obnoxious. Without considering the reaction in particular, I may

connect with these facts some further remarks on Tennyson's limitations.

In one respect FitzGerald was, surely, quite wrong. It is true—or at any rate I do not deny—that after 1842 Tennyson wrote nothing *of the same kind* that was equal to the *Lady of Shalott*, or the *Lotos-Eaters*, or even *Mariana* ; but in most, perhaps in all, of the non-dramatic volumes after 1842 there was, I should say, something of *another* kind quite equal to those poems, and I doubt if Meredith or Swinburne would have questioned this, or if any critic of repute would question it now. And yet most lovers of Tennyson's poetry, while sure that FitzGerald was so far wrong, still vaguely feel, I think, that the extraordinary promise of the early poems was never quite fulfilled. This fact seems puzzling ; but the explanation seems to be that, rationally or not, we expect a man who writes first-rate short poems in his earlier life to write long ones at least as good in later years ; and Tennyson failed to do this, none of his long poems being equal, as a whole, to the best of his short ones, early and late. Well, that would hold good of some other nineteenth-century poets, and I have tried elsewhere [1] to point out general reasons for the fact. But what were the more special reasons in the case of Tennyson?

Let us take the *Idylls of the King*. They swarm with beautiful passages. Some of them, taken separately, I for my part continue to read with un-

[1] *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, pp. 177-205.

diminished pleasure. But the whole, beyond doubt, fails to satisfy. There are various causes of the failure, affecting various readers in different degrees. Some readers are most displeased with certain defects of style, to which I will return. Some object most to Tennyson's morality; others to the element of allegory; others to his departure from the spirit of the old stories, or at any rate to his degradation of heroes like Tristram or Gawain. I feel all these objections more or less; and at the same time I do not think a poem can be too moral if its morality is sufficiently original or deep, and I do not care how much allegory it contains, or how freely it treats its material, if the result is successful. In poetry, at all events, the end justifies the means. But in the morality and the allegorical meaning of the *Idylls* there is not much that is new, and what is new does not appear to deepen greatly the old. It fails to do so, I think, because Tennyson had not in any marked degree that universal interest in human nature, that penetrating insight into it, or that power of portraying it in uniquely individual forms, which belonged in different degrees to Shakespeare and to Browning. On what may be called the metaphysical or mystical side his mind was not simple, but in regard to human character it was. He could express perfectly certain feelings and moods, even passionate ones. He could depict admirably, in later years, such typical figures as the Grandmother and the Northern Farmer. But

that is not enough for a long and wholly serious narrative, and it could not suffice for the *Idylls*, where the characters were to be modernized, and where, if the story was to have the effect of tragedy, it was especially important that the leading characters should be intensely imagined and thoroughly individual. This they are far from being. Guinevere is the most shadowy, and Lancelot the least; but Lancelot is not more individual than many heroes in novels of the second rank, and, although he is meant to be a *large* character, large as Othello and Antony are large, somehow he is not so. Arthur, again, in Tennyson's early *Morte d'Arthur*, is what he should be, because neither his relation to the lovers nor his semi-allegorical character comes in. But in the *Idylls* both come in, and the position is hopeless. He has in some measure to represent conscience; and then he is no person, and the relation of the lovers to him ceases to be personal. And yet he must be a person, a noble friend and a loving husband; and then we cannot give to the lovers the degree of sympathy which a tragic story demands. The result of all this is, to me, that, apart from the numberless beautiful passages in the *Idylls*, and apart from the *Passing of Arthur*, Tennyson succeeds most where the story makes but slight demands on the side of character (as in *Enid* and *Elaine*), and where the character interest is united with the mystical (as in the *Holy Grail*).

In *In Memoriam* this weakness of Tennyson's naturally does not appear. In *Maud* it is plain enough, but is not of much consequence. It matters little that neither Maud herself nor her brother is an individual, as each would have been if Browning had treated the subject. The hero, too, answers Tennyson's purpose sufficiently ; but in his case the weakness in question is not quite unimportant, and one feels there is something amiss. This hero, like the speakers in the two *Locksley Hall* poems, drew down on Tennyson both anger and ridicule. The anger was mainly due to his attitude, real or supposed, towards war, and I pass it by. But what is the cause of the ridicule ? The hero in *Maud*, it is said, is a poor hysterical creature. " Well," one answers, " he was meant to be, and why should he not be ? He excites enough sympathy for the purpose, and he is not the hero of a great tragedy like *Hamlet*." And yet this answer does not suffice. One has an uncomfortable suspicion that Tennyson himself hardly realized *how* poor a creature the hero was. And there is another doubt. When people took all the railing in *Maud* and the *Locksley Hall* poems for Tennyson's own railing, he justly protested. But, while they were clearly wrong in law, were they wholly wrong in fact ? He once told his neighbour at a dinner party that all the Tennysons were afflicted with black bile, and he dilated with sufficient eloquence on this affliction. Had it not something to

do with the railing in those poems, and is it not this that we feel? And is not railing in literature a mistake? We may remember that the practice of railing distinguished two other great writers of that time, Carlyle and Ruskin, and that it diminished their influence. It has died out now: partly for good reasons, partly perhaps for the worst—that there is no prophet left in Israel.

In spite, however, of these defects, it remains true that, among the longer works, *Maud* and *In Memoriam* have the great advantage of not requiring original or intense conceptions of character. They have another. Though long, they are lyrical; and, if it would be absurd to class Tennyson with Herrick or Burns as simply or essentially a lyrical poet, one may still think that his style is most constantly and perfectly right when he is using lyrical forms. In particular, it is then, except in some of the earliest pieces, least open to the charge of elaborateness. This charge has been brought against Tennyson by good judges; most readers now feel, perhaps, that there is some ground for it; and I must refer to it briefly. As with other charges, so with this, it is necessary to distinguish. Tennyson rarely, perhaps never, "pipes but as the linnets sing." He does not attain, if he ever attempts, the artless air of the *Volkslied* or of the best songs of Burns or of some of the Elizabethans. Nor again has his style, even in his simpler lyrics, the bare trenchant force which

Wordsworth, and Byron occasionally, could command. But "elaborate" is surely not the appropriate word to apply to "Break, break, break" or *Crossing the Bar*, to *Rizpah* or the *Northern Farmer*, to *Boadicea* or *The Revenge*, or even to "Tears, idle tears" or "The splendour falls,"—and how easy it would be to extend this list of examples! In other and equally characteristic lyrical pieces—for instance, the *Dream of Fair Women*—the style is enriched, and may fairly be called elaborate. But then the word need bear no tinge of blame; it need not imply artifice, glossy polish, or irrelevant jewellery. And this holds good of many non-lyrical poems, such as *Oenone* or *Lucretius*. On the other hand, a good deal of the poetry, and especially, I think, of the narrative poetry, *is* elaborate either in a way or in a degree that is faulty. The defect is patent in cases where Tennyson makes most effort to be direct and plain (as in *Dora*, or again in *Enoch Arden* and in some of the English Idylls parodied by Calverley).[1] If again

[1] See Arnold's lectures *On Translating Homer*, Popular edition, pp. 161 ff.; and again Swinburne's *Essays and Studies* (1875), where Tennyson is frequently criticized without being named. If the "reactionary" would consult these books he would understand why the surviving mid-Victorian fails to learn much from the reaction. I may add, what Swinburne would have confirmed, that, as Tennyson advanced in age, the lyrical verse, and in some degree the other verse, of the wonderful old poet freed itself more and more from the defects discussed above. And I take the opportunity to add further that, if I have made no mention in this lecture of Tennyson's dramas, it is not because I fail to admire and enjoy most of them, but merely because no one would base on them his claim to stand in the company of his immediate predecessors.

one turns from the *Idylls of the King*, I will not say to Chaucer, but to Morris or even to Arnold, one has at once a sense of relief and refreshment ; and in the later *Idylls*, especially when the poet has to deal with matter that does not inspire him, one is conscious of effort and artifice and often of the mannerism to which they led. Now such defects (though they are not absent from *In Memoriam*) are much rarer in the lyrical verse, and therefore—to return to my point—it was an advantage to *In Memoriam* and *Maud* that they are lyrical. And *Maud*, on this side, is the superior. The stanza used in *In Memoriam* suits the poem admirably ; but *Maud* has a much larger variety of metrical shapes, movements, and velocities ; and the form of " lyrical monodrama," where only one person of the drama speaks, but speaks always in a lyric, was perfectly adapted to the poet's genius. It seems to have been his own invention, and it has seldom been used since.[1]

[1] I could not discuss in the lecture the merits and defects of *In Memoriam*, and I can add here only a brief note. The questionings and arguments in that poem, like the more emotional sections, are subsidiary to its main subject, which is identical with that of *Maud*—the development of a soul through love, loss, and the conquest of loss. The treatment of this subject is very much deeper in *In Memoriam* than in *Maud*. On this side, indeed, *In Memoriam* seems to me, in point of originality and depth, much superior to any other long poem by Tennyson ; and that its superiority here has not *poetic* value I cannot for a moment admit. That it is very defective as an " organism " (which it does not claim to be) is obvious ; and it has other defects. Perhaps my view, or feeling, may be indicated by the formula that it is the " greatest " of the long poems, and *Maud* the " best."

Maud illustrates another characteristic of Tennyson's—one that we cannot wish away, but at the same time a source of danger. You know the distinction drawn between two strains in the Romantic Movement: the first, the more strictly "romantic," best represented by Coleridge and Keats, with its love of picture and colour, the marvellous or mysterious, the far-away in time or place; the other, sometimes called "naturalistic," of which Wordsworth, writing of the peasants around him, was the great exponent. Tennyson united these strains more completely than any of his predecessors. His poetic instinct, I think, impelled him most strongly in the more romantic direction. What first made his reputation in small circles, and still in the fifties most fascinated Rossetti and Morris, is to be found mainly in such poems as *Mariana*, *The Lady of Shalott*, *The Lotos-Eaters*, *A Dream of Fair Women*, *Morte d'Arthur*. But from the first he wrote also poems, usually much less good, dealing directly with the life of his own time; and, though we have only internal evidence to go upon, it seems likely that he had formed the conviction (often expressed by others in later days) that a poet ought to speak to his generation about itself. Therefore he wrote the English Idylls, and later he wrote *Maud*, and fixed the date of the events in the time of the Crimean War. Therefore, also, in writing of subjects of the other kind, he almost always modernized them. The old stories of Arthur's death

and of the Sleeping Beauty enchanted him; but when he re-told them he added Prologues and Epilogues which show his intention to modernize; and his Lotos-Eaters and Ulysses were certainly not meant to be those of Homer. It was not till he came to write the *Idylls of the King* that the danger of this tendency became pressing, but in an inverted form it may be seen perhaps in *The Princess*, where he tries to put a present-day or future-day problem into surroundings that belong to no earthly place or time.

In his poems of contemporary life Tennyson enlarged considerably the range of the social subject-matter used by his great predecessors. I can only give one example. With a little exaggeration one may say that the Englishwoman belonging to "the nobility and gentry"—a person whom Shakespeare introduced often enough, usually under a foreign name—had for some time wellnigh vanished from serious poetry; for Crabbe did not often soar above the lower-middle class. Tennyson brought her back. He is reproached with doing so; but to do so was, in principle, a merit. His intention was not always well carried out, and I confess that I do not desire a closer acquaintance with Adeline or Lilian. But, to take two out of many instances, I think the stanzas *To Mary Boyle* one of the most perfect things he ever wrote, and an example of a kind of verse in which no contemporary approached him; and the stanzas beginning "Come into the garden" were addressed

to a girl leaving a ball-room " in gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls," and their rhythm (Verrall told us) is meant to recall that of a polka. The weakness of character-drawing in *Maud* cannot affect those stanzas, or " I have led her home," or " O that 'twere possible." When they are forgotten, *Romeo and Juliet* will be forgotten too.

After all this balancing and distinguishing, it would be a relief to me, as well as to you, if I ended with mere praise of what is greatest and highest in Tennyson's poetry. But that would take too long, and I will end with praise of a minor merit, which I think as indisputable as any poetical merit can be. It appears, though not solely, in his treatment of Nature. As regards that particular treatment of Nature which we associate with the name of Wordsworth, I should not think of comparing Tennyson either with Wordsworth or with Shelley ; but I believe he is unsurpassed, and I suspect he is unequalled, among English poets in two things—one, the accuracy and delicacy of his perceptions ; and the other, the felicity of his translation into language of that which he perceives. The first of these things is not specially distinctive of a poet ; the second, though not by itself enough to make a poet great, is *the* distinction of a poet from other artists. Poetry is an art of language ; and the born poet, of whatever size, is a person who has a peculiar gift for translating his experiences—what-

ever he sees, hears, feels, imagines, thinks—into metrical language, a special necessity in his nature to do this, and a unique joy in doing it well. The universe, we may say, is for him an invitation or a challenge to such expression. Well, just now we are concerned with sense-experiences, and especially those that come from Nature; and I repeat that here Tennyson seems to me unsurpassed and perhaps unequalled among our poets in the accuracy and delicacy of his perceptions, and in the felicity of his translation into language of that which he perceives.[1] As to the latter you may perhaps recall Ruskin's emphatic statement: "Tennyson's 'Rivulet' [he means *The Brook*] is far beyond anything I ever did, or could have done, in beauty of description." As to the former you will certainly remember how attention was called in *Cranford* to the line,

More black than ash-buds in the front of March,

and how, since then, this line has been quoted *ad nauseam* as though it were something exceptional. In reality it is an example, and not a remarkable one, of something ubiquitous in Tennyson. If a man who had derived great happiness from the observation of nature were stricken with blindness or confined for the rest of his life to a sick-room, and if he were condemned to lose his recollection of all poets but

[1] Since this lecture was first given, two excellent papers by Mr. Morton Luce on *Nature in Tennyson* (Birds and Trees) have appeared in the *British Review* (1915).

one, Tennyson's is the poetry he should choose to keep. There, for example, he could follow the progress of spring, from the beginning when

> Once more the Heavenly Power
> Makes all things new,
> And domes the red-plowed hills
> With loving blue ;

when rosy plumelets tuft the larch, and a million emeralds break from the ruby-budded lime, and the ruddy-hearted blossom-flakes flutter down from the elm in tens of thousands ; when the satin-shining palms appear on sallows in the windy gleams, and, later, a gust strikes the yew and puffs the swaying branches into smoke, and all the wood stands in a mist of green, till, later still, as you cross the wood you pass through a green gloom. Or, again, Tennyson will bring back to him the coming of the storm ; its green malignant light near the horizon ; then the ragged rims of thunder brooding low, with shadow-streaks of rain ; and then the blasts that blow the poplar white and lash with storm the streaming pane ; the stammering cracks and claps, the bellowing of the tempest, and at last the sounds of its retreat into the distance, moaning and calling out of other lands. Or, if he has loved the sea, with Tennyson he may still watch, on a windless day, the crisping ripples on the beach, and tender curving lines of creamy spray ; or, on a windy one, crisp foam-flakes scudding along the level sand ; or may recall from memories of the

open sea a huge wave, green-glimmering towards the summit, with all its stormy crests that smoke against the skies. It will be just the same with him if he thinks of sunrise and sunset; of the nightingale or the thrush (whose voice has so become speech in *The Throstle* that, as he remembers it, he will laugh for amusement and joy); or of the mother-dog with her blind and shuddering puppies, or the rabbit fondling his own harmless face. And, as our invalid lies awake through the night in his sick-room, he may remember Tennyson when the grandfather clocks in rooms beneath throb thunder through the floors, and may remember Tennyson again as the dawn approaches and the casement slowly grows a glimmering square.

These are a few examples [1] of what I mean, out of hundreds. Well, my friend of the reaction will not find in the poetic virtue shown in them the deepest and highest that poetry can reach or that this poet can reach; but he will not belittle it if he loves nature and knows what poetry is. Let him enjoy it, if he can enjoy nothing else in Tennyson. And if he enjoys and reveres science too (from a closer acquaintance, I hope, than mine), perhaps he will consider favourably the last claim that I urge on behalf of this poet. We live, and civilized man must continue to live, in an age of science. But, with the

[1] I have not thought it necessary to give references to the poems and passages where these "examples" occur.

partial exception of Shelley, Tennyson is the only one of our great poets whose attitude towards the sciences of Nature was what a modern poet's attitude ought to be ; the only one whose words constantly come to your mind as you read, if you can get no farther, your manual of astronomy [1] or geology ; the only one to whose habitual way of seeing, imagining, or thinking, it makes any real difference that Laplace, or for that matter Copernicus, ever lived. He gazed too, without flinching, on aspects of Nature which Wordsworth did not face ; and in this also the poetry of the future must surely follow him. One may hope that courage and faithfulness like his will not prevent it, as it prevented him, from sharing Wordsworth's intuition of

> A central peace, subsisting at the heart
> Of endless agitation.

But, however that may be, when we have again a poetry of Nature equal to Wordsworth's, it will have to be, in his own phrase, " the inspired expression that is in the countenance of all science," and it will look back with gratitude to Tennyson.

[1] Readers who may be interested in Tennyson's very numerous astronomical passages will find a full treatment of the subject by Mr. C. T. Whitmell in the *Journal and Transactions of the Leeds Astronomical Society* for 1906.

JANE AUSTEN [1]

In speaking to you of Jane Austen I must assume, not only that you are familiar with her novels, but that, like myself, you belong to the faithful. That does not bind us to rank her with the very greatest novel-writers, or to prefer her works to others more ambitious and more faulty. But it does imply a perception and enjoyment of her surpassing excellence within that comparatively narrow sphere whose limits she never tried to overpass—an excellence which, we may perhaps venture to say, gives her in that sphere the position held by Shakespeare in his. Those who lack this perception or dispute its truth may possibly be in the right ; but attempts to prove that they are wrong are perfectly futile, since all the proofs rest on the perception itself. I must therefore assume that you belong to the faithful. And, if you do, you will not wish me to add another to the

[1] A lecture given at Newnham College, Cambridge, and published (with the addition of notes) in *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, 1911. I venture to advise the reader to ignore the notes in reading the text. I regret that I cannot say what edition of the novels I used in referring to the chapters, the arrangement of which appears to differ in different editions of the novels.

estimates of Jane Austen's genius; nor, on the other hand, will you ask me whether I have anything new to say. I do not know enough of Austen criticism to answer the question; nor does it matter. The faithful enjoy comparing notes; and I offer you some of mine, and wish that you could give me yours in return.

I begin by referring to two matters which seem to be unknown to many readers of Jane Austen, and which all her readers would certainly like to know. The first is the fact that the six novels fall into two distinct groups, separated by a considerable interval of time. She came of age in December, 1796. In that year and the two following she wrote *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Northanger Abbey*. None of the three was published at once; but in 1809 she began to revise the first two for publication, and then she composed, in this order, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*, which was finished in 1816. Thus, to put it roughly, the first group of three was written between the ages of twenty and twenty-two, and the second group between the ages of thirty-five and forty. Some ten months after the completion of *Persuasion* her life came to an end.[1]

[1] The novels were published in the following order: *Sense and Sensibility*, 1811; *Pride and Prejudice*, 1813; *Mansfield Park*, 1814; *Emma*, 1816; *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, posthumously, 1818. *Sense and Sensibility*, originally called *Elinor and Marianne* and written in the form of letters, was composed in this

But the six novels are not quite all that remains to us of her writing: and this is the second fact which none of her readers should ignore. Mr. Austen Leigh in the *Memoir* of his aunt (now published in Macmillan's Eversley Series) gave some account, with extracts, of the story she began in the last months of her life. He printed also, under the title of *The Watsons*, the opening chapters of a novel begun and abandoned about 1803; *i.e.* in that long interval between the two groups. And, lastly, in the same volume, there is the tale called *Lady Susan*. The editor is doubtless right in dating it before the earliest of the completed works, and it bears the marks of immaturity. But in one respect it is the most interesting of all the fragments; for it proposes to do what its author never again attempted. Lady Susan is not a "mixed" character, but a downright bad one; a bold, adroit, and fascinating adventuress, who with sufficient inducement would turn into a criminal; and she has a friend who is no

shape before *Pride and Prejudice* (then called *First Impressions*), but rewritten in 1797 and 1798 after that novel was composed. Jane Austen began to revise them when she went to live at Chawton in 1809: she "lop't and crop't" the latter a good deal (*Memoir*, 98). There is clear internal evidence of the revision here and there. For example, in *Sense and Sensibility*, ch. 14, Scott is mentioned as though he was a popular poet, and he was so in 1809 but not in 1797 or 1798. I do not know of any evidence that *Northanger Abbey* was revised. It is referred to in a letter of March, 1816 (*Letters*, ii. 297): "'Miss Catherine' is put upon the shelf for the present, and I do not know that she will ever come out." For most of the facts mentioned in the text and in this note, see *Memoir*, 47, 95; *Letters*, i. 151, 152.

better than herself. The story is ostensibly brought to an end, but in fact it stops in the middle of the plot. Perhaps Jane Austen felt that her treatment of such a character must depend too much on mere fancy; but the actual treatment, though not searching, is firm and clear and delightfully cool.

Besides these unfinished novels we have her letters, some of them printed in the *Memoir*, a larger number in the two volumes edited by Lord Brabourne (1884). They are generally described as disappointing; and so they must be if we expect letters which are literature, or which admit us into the writer's inmost mind. We must not look for this. They are the hasty letters of a girl, and then of a woman, who regarded herself as the member of an affectionate family, and only incidentally as a writer, or even a reader, of books, and whose inmost mind lay in her religion—a religion powerful in her life and not difficult to trace in her novels, but quiet, untheoretical, and rarely openly expressed. We find in the letters, no doubt, a few precious allusions to her novels. We can tell who were some of her favourite authors: Richardson, her "dear Doctor Johnson," Cowper, Miss Burney, Miss Edgeworth, Crabbe, the only person she could fancy herself marrying.[1] She refers to

[1] Most of the allusions are to *Sir Charles Grandison*; I have noticed none to *Clarissa*. The allusions to Dr. Johnson, again, seem to be always to the Dr. Johnson of Boswell and Mrs. Piozzi. For Crabbe, see especially ii. 193.

Scott and to Byron, but shows no acquaintance with Wordsworth or Coleridge. A series of letters to a niece who was writing a story contains some views on novel-writing which we are glad to read, though we could have guessed them from the author's practice. But of the tremendous public events of her time we hear very little. Although one of her sisters-in-law was the widow of a victim of the guillotine, we should hardly be aware that the French Revolution had taken place: I do not think the names of Napoleon and Wellington ever occur: and if we trusted to the letters we should have to conclude that, while she was devoted to her naval brothers, she cared nothing about Nelson. For the most part Jane simply tells her sister Cassandra, exactly as if she were talking to her, what is happening in the house or garden or village; who is dead or engaged or has a baby; with whom she danced the day before yesterday, or what her new clothes are to be. It is mostly very trivial, and to me the information regarding the clothes is mostly unintelligible. But I do not find the letters disappointing. The Jane Austen who wrote the novels is in them. They take one into a narrow world, but the world of the novels is narrow too, and the author's mind is another matter. And the attitude of the letter-writer towards the world she lives in is, *mutatis mutandis*, the attitude of the novel-writer towards the world she creates. The world is full of interest, for it is full of

human nature. It is highly amusing, for the human being swarms with oddities, absurdities, self-deceptions, and contradictions. It has its serious and its sad aspects, and we are bound to behave well in it. But evil and unhappiness are not its dominant features. One should not talk of them more than is necessary, and, whatever one does, one should not be sentimental. Let me give a few illustrations.

The novelist's interest in human nature appears in the letters in significant little ways. Jane Austen played the piano and sang ; but when she has gone to a concert what she mentions is not the music she heard, but the people she met. Of a visit to a picture gallery she herself says : " My preference for men and women always inclines me to attend more to the company than to the sight " (ii. 82), and if she does allude to a picture, I think it is always a portrait. But when she goes to the theatre it is the play she talks of, for there are human beings in that. If she were alive now she would ride in tubes and omnibuses to watch the occupants.

How characteristic, again, is this about the husband of a relative with whom she was staying ! The coachman was late one day in bringing the carriage, and, says Jane Austen, " Mr. Moore was very angry, which I was rather glad of. I wanted to see him angry " (ii. 196).

We find the same thing in this passage, the open-

ing of a letter to a niece, some twenty years her junior, who was consulting her about a love affair :

" My dearest Fanny,—You are inimitable, irresistible. You are the delight of my life. Such letters, such entertaining letters as you have lately sent ! such a description of your queer little heart ! such a lovely display of what imagination does ! You are worth your weight in gold, or even in the new silver coinage. I cannot express to you what I have felt in reading your history of yourself —how full of pity and concern, and admiration and amusement, I have been ! You are the paragon of all that is silly and sensible, commonplace and eccentric, sad and lively, provoking and interesting. Who can keep pace with the fluctuations of your fancy, the caprizios of your taste, the contradictions of your feelings ! You are so odd, and all the time so perfectly natural ! so peculiar in yourself, and yet so like everybody else " (ii. 290).

Jane Austen was a most affectionate aunt, and worshipped by her nephews and nieces, and the whole correspondence shows how much she cared for this niece. All the same the aunt was the novelist, and the niece a player in the comedy of life.

The letters show us that the humorous attitude was habitual, not only with Jane Austen, but in her family. Her father, a country clergyman, was a scholar with an eager sanguine temperament ; her mother, " a quick-witted woman with plenty of sparkle and spirit in her talk." [1] She, the genius,

[1] Statement by Jane Austen's niece Anna, quoted in Constance Hill's *Jane Austen, her Homes and her Friends*, 32. I should add that, so far as I know, there is no evidence that the father was humorous.

grew up with four brothers and a sister, fond of books, fond of acting, cheerful, high-spirited, full of nonsense and fun, kind-hearted, good to the poor, but merciless to pretension, affectation, and sentimentality, and, it would seem, a little disposed to consider strangers as, in the first instance, comic phenomena. This is the natural attitude of such young people. They themselves do not yet quite belong to real life, and, except when it presses on them, they view it in the spirit of the comic artist who delights in it as a show. Stupid outsiders misconstrue their nonsense, but they understand one another, and Jane says what she likes to Cassandra. Something of this youthful family atmosphere clings to the whole correspondence, and it must not be forgotten. "The Wylmots being robbed," Jane writes, "must be an amusing thing to their acquaintance, and I hope it is as much their pleasure as it is their avocation to be subjects of general entertainment" (i. 270). Poor Mrs. Hall, it seems, has had a fright, and her child is still-born; so Jane tells her sister, and she adds: "I suppose she happened unawares to look at her husband" (i. 159). Here is her comment on the death of Mrs. W. K.: "I had no idea that anybody liked her, and therefore felt nothing for any survivor; but I am now feeling away on her husband's account, and think he had better marry Miss Sharpe" (i. 325). We need not suppose that this satiric close applied to Mr. W. K.

and Miss Sharpe in particular; like many of the remarks in the letters it is directed to human nature in general. For example, she writes of a new acquaintance, "She seems a really agreeable woman—that is, her manners are gentle, and she knows a great many of our connexions in West Kent" (ii. 40). And of some new-comers, "Charles Powlett has been very ill, but is getting well again. His wife is discovered to be everything the neighbourhood could wish her, silly and cross as well as extravagant" (i. 179). And of a boy going to school: "He is going to Rugby, and is very happy in the idea of it; I wish his happiness may last, but it will be a great change to become a raw schoolboy from being a pompous sermon-writer and a domineering brother" (ii. 74). But there is no satire in this musical description of aunt Jane's niece Anna, whom she reports to be developing satisfactorily: "She is quite an Anna with variations, but she cannot have reached her last, for that is always the most flourishing and showy; she is at about her third or fourth, which are generally simple and pretty" (ii. 93). Nor is there often satire in the passages about clothes, though there is sometimes humour. A specimen of these must be given. She is staying in London, and her sister at home has sent her a commission.

"Though," Jane writes, "you have given me unlimited powers concerning your sprig, I cannot determine

what to do about it, and shall therefore in this and in every other future letter continue to ask your farther directions. We have been to the cheap shop, and very cheap we found it, but there are only flowers made there, no fruit; and as I could get four or five very pretty sprigs of the former for the same money which would procure only one Orleans plum . . . I cannot decide on the fruit till I hear from you again. Besides, I cannot help thinking that it is more natural to have flowers grow out of the head than fruit. What do you think on that subject?" (i. 216).

And now, hoping that these quotations may have won some new readers for the letters, I pass to heavier matter.

To the historian of literary epochs Jane Austen is, or should be, a little inconvenient. She was born a few years later than Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Scott. When she died, Byron was famous, and Shelley and Keats had already published. She belongs therefore to the period commonly entitled that of the Romantic Revival, or the Revival of Imagination. And yet these titles do not suit her in the least. The Waverley Novels are "romantic" in this special sense, but hers are not. They might even be called anti-romantic. Nor are they more imaginative than those of Richardson and Fielding, in the sense implied in the phrase Revival of Imagination. That other favourite title, again, "return to nature," seems to leave her equally untouched. She was, indeed, intensely fond of the country; but scenery

plays no great part in her novels, and we find scarcely a trace of the distinctively new modes of feeling towards nature. She resembles Cowper here, not Wordsworth or Shelley. If we take "return to nature" more widely, she still fails to show this return. She does not write of human nature in its most simple, primitive, or unsocial forms. She has no savages or outlaws; the lower orders appear only and casually in a peasant or two, or an hotel waiter; of the few children, most are spoilt; and she is perfectly innocent of the idea that civilization is the fall of man from some paradisal state of nature. The one contemporary poet with whom she has a marked affinity is Crabbe, but it ceases where Crabbe is most imaginative, as in *Sir Eustace Grey*, or *Prisons*, or *Peter Grimes*. She is separated both by her limitations and by her strength from the greater poets of her time. The strangeness of her position is diminished, no doubt, if we remember that those well-worn titles ignore a large part of the prose literature of her day; but that part was, on the whole, second-rate, and the fact remains that she belongs to the first-rate writers, and is an exception among them. We might even say that she got nothing from the Romantic Revival except the opportunity of making fun of Mrs. Radcliffe. Essentially, it appears to me, her novels belong to the age of Johnson and Cowper.

There are two distinct strains in Jane Austen. She is a moralist and a humorist. These strains are

often blended or even completely fused, but still they may be distinguished. It is the first that connects her with Johnson, by whom, I suspect, she was a good deal influenced. With an intellect much less massive, she still observes human nature with the same penetration and the same complete honesty. She is like him in the abstention—no doubt, in her case, much less deliberate—from speculation, and in the orthodoxy and strength of her religion. She is very like him in her contempt for mere sentiment, and for that " cant " of which Boswell was recommended to clear his mind. We remember Johnson in those passages where she refuses to express a deeper concern than she feels for misfortune or grief, and with both there is an occasional touch of brutality in the manner of the refusal. It is a question, however, of manner alone, and when she speaks her mind fully and gravely she speaks for Johnson too ; as when she makes Emma say : " I hope it may be allowed that, if compassion has produced exertion and relief to the sufferers, it has done all that is truly important. If we feel for the wretched enough to do all we can for them, the rest is empty sympathy, only distressing to ourselves " (ch. 10). Finally, like Johnson, she is, in the strict sense, a moralist. Her morality, that is to say, is not merely embodied in her plots, it is often openly expressed. She followed a fashion of the day in her abstract titles, *Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Persuasion* ; but the

fashion coincides with the movement of her mind, and she knew very well the main lesson to be drawn from the other three novels. Her explicit statements and comments are often well worth pondering, though their terminology is sometimes old-fashioned, and though her novels contain infinitely more wisdom than they formulate.

With very few exceptions the greater writers differ little in what may be called their ultimate morality ; but two or three minor traits may be singled out in Jane Austen's. One is her marked distrust of any indulgence in emotion or imagination where these are not plainly subservient to the resolve to do the right thing, however disagreeable or prosaic it may be. This meets us everywhere, and it has more than one effect. It leads her to approve of such heroines as Elinor Dashwood, Fanny Price, and Anne Elliot ; and we share her approval. On the other hand, for some readers, the suppression of feeling and fancy in these characters, or at least in the first two, much diminishes their charm, and even suggests the idea, which Jane Austen certainly did not hold, that good sense and dutifulness are apt to be spiritless or even depressed.

Another trait is her refusal to depict those conflicts of violent passions which display, even in misdoing, the possibilities of human nature, and at once agitate and uplift us as her pictures of life never can. Like most of us, she never experienced, or even witnessed,

such passions, and she had the wisdom, not too common in novelists, to avoid what she did not know. Besides, "guilt and misery" were to her "odious subjects," [1] which she quitted as soon as she could. Hence, though her morality is serious and, in some points, severe, her novels make exceptionally peaceful reading. She troubles us neither with problems nor with painful emotions, and if there is a wound in our minds she is not likely to probe it.

Connected with this trait is another, which has the same effect. Unlike Johnson, she was blessed with a sunny temper, and she takes a brighter view of life. If we may judge from her works, she thought that very few people are naturally ill-disposed. If you examine you find that almost always the faults of her characters are directly connected with bad training, or want of training, in youth. Her opinion of parents who spoil their children or teach them that the object of life is to have what is now called "a good time," is obvious both in her novels and her letters. Darcy had an excellent disposition; he was *taught* to be proud. Why were the Bertram sisters what they were? Because their father was negligent and rather worldly, their mother a slug, and their aunt Mrs. Norris. I do not remember one instance in Jane Austen of a child who was well brought up and turned out badly. She might have called her novels "The Parents' Assistant in six volumes." It is con-

[1] *Mansfield Park*, opening of ch. 48.

ceivable that they might still be of use ; and horrible as it may appear to the modern parent that she asks him to believe on a week-day in " the advantages of early hardship and discipline, and the consciousness of being born to struggle and endure " (*Mansfield Park, sub fin.*), at least she does not ask him also to believe that his child is born bad.

The chief danger of a moralizing tendency is that it may lead the novelist to falsify human nature. I do not think it so misleads Jane Austen. She is not invariably true to human nature, but it is not her desire to edify that makes her false. There is nothing improbable in the connexion she portrays between goodness and happiness, or between error and failure. Nor do we ever think of saying that her characters are too good or too bad to be real. Somebody seems indeed to have complained that her heroines were not good enough, and she replies that pictures of perfection make her sick and wicked (*Letters*, ii. 300). The large experience of Catherine Morland led her to suspect that, though among Mrs. Radcliffe's Alps and Pyrenees there might be no mixed characters, " among the English, in their hearts and habits, there was a general, though unequal, mixture of good and bad." Jane Austen seems to have shared this suspicion. And, finally, her sympathies and antipathies never make her unjust. Indeed, in her justice she is quite Shakespearian. One example may serve for many. She must have detested Mrs.

Norris. We all do. Who could say a good word for her? Jane Austen could. When Sir Thomas Bertram refused to receive Maria again in his house, Mrs. Norris devoted herself to the niece whose character she had done so much to spoil. She took her away to an "establishment formed for them in another country, remote and private, where, shut up together with little society, on one side no affection, on the other no judgement, it may be reasonably supposed that their tempers became their mutual punishment." Well, we cannot pretend to mind that much, but we realize that this intolerable woman had strong affections, and we admit that the story has implied this all along, though our hatred of her may have made us blind to it.

But Jane Austen's favourite attitude, we may even say her instinctive attitude, is, of course, that of the humorist. And this is not all. The foibles, illusions, self-contradictions, of human nature are a joy to her for their own sakes, but also because through action they lead to consequences which may be serious but may also be comic. In that case they produce sometimes matter fit for a comedy, a play in which people's lives fall into an entanglement of errors, misunderstandings, and cross-purposes, from which they are rescued, not by their own wisdom or skill, but by the kindness of Fortune or some Providence with a weakness for lovers. This point of view, the

point of view not merely of humour but of comedy, is so marked in Jane Austen's novels as to suggest that she was a good deal influenced by the drama. So at least it seems to me, though I cannot say by what drama; for I have observed no signs of her acquaintance with Restoration Comedy, or even with Goldsmith or Sheridan, and I have little knowledge of the inferior plays current in her time.[1] But we know that the Austen children used to act, that some of Jane's childish compositions were dramatic in form, that she liked going to the theatre, and that the young people in *Mansfield Park* rehearsed a version by Mrs. Inchbald of a play by Kotzebue. There are not a few dialogues in her works which, one imagines, might be transferred with scarcely any change to the stage. Some scenes that are open to criticism as parts of a novel would be quite in place in a drama. For instance, Mr. Collins's proposal to Elizabeth, delightful as it is, suggests farce; and the effect of Willoughby's sudden nocturnal entrance in extreme agitation just at the moment when Elinor, at the crisis of her sister's illness, is awaiting the arrival of their mother, is perhaps a trifle melodramatic. Mary, again, the third of the Bennet sisters, appears always in the same attitude, like a comedy stock-figure. And where no such criticisms can be maintained, it

[1] Some one in want of a subject for a Degree thesis might turn his attention to this matter. I owe the identification of *Lovers' Vows* to Mr. Mackail.

will still be found that many scenes, as well as persons like Mr. Bennet and Sir Walter Elliot, seem almost to be made for the theatre.

But the resemblance to comedy goes further: it extends to the whole story. In all her novels, though in varying degrees, Jane Austen regards the characters, good and bad alike, with ironical amusement, because they never see the situation as it really is and as she sees it. This is the deeper source of our unbroken pleasure in reading her. We constantly share her point of view, and are aware of the amusing difference between the fact and its appearance to the actors. If you fail to perceive and enjoy this, you are not really reading Jane Austen. Some readers do not perceive it, and therefore fail to appreciate her. Others perceive it without enjoying it, and they think her cynical. She is never cynical, and not often merely satirical. A cynic or a mere satirist may be intellectually pleased by human absurdities and illusions, but he does not feel them to be good. But to Jane Austen, so far as they are not seriously harmful, they are altogether pleasant, because they are both ridiculous and right. It is amusing, for example, that Knightley, who is almost a model of good sense, right feeling, and just action, should be unjust to Frank Churchill because, though he does not know it, he himself is in love with Emma: but to Jane Austen that is not only the way a man *is* made, but the way he *should* be made. No doubt

there are plenty of things that should not be, but when we so regard them they are not comical. A main point of difference between Jane Austen and Johnson is that to her much more of the world is amusing, and much more of it is right. She is less of a moralist and more of a humorist.

Of her novels perhaps *Pride and Prejudice* makes us laugh most, but *Northanger Abbey* and *Emma* are the two in which this comedy point of view is most predominant. In *Pride and Prejudice* the sources of mirth lie chiefly in the minor characters, and the main subject is not, on the whole, treated humorously. But the comic contrast of reality with Catherine Morland's illusions is the nerve of the whole story. Primarily, of course, it concerns the ideas which she has imbibed from Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, and which induce her, when she finds herself in an abbey, to look for the record of some thrilling mystery in what turns out to be a washing-bill, and to weave a direful romance of crime out of the little she has heard of General Tilney's lawfully deceased wife ; and it culminates in the contrast between the romantic horror of his imaginary behaviour to Mrs. Tilney, and the actual and exceedingly prosaic horror of his treatment of Catherine herself. But this theme is embroidered by perpetual minor illusions on the part of Catherine, who, for example, when she sees that shameless flirt, Captain Tilney, amusing himself with Isabella, is deeply concerned to think what he

will suffer on finding that Isabella is already engaged, and interprets his very late appearance at breakfast as the consequence of a night of sleepless mental agony. *Northanger Abbey*, one of the youthful works and the most light-hearted of all, is one of the most enjoyable, and the heroine is a triumph. For her extreme simple-mindedness is always felt to be engaging and even lovable, and never suggests, like that of Harriet Smith, imbecility of mind or want of personality. Henry Tilney, too, is much the most agreeable of the clerical heroes ; and we should grieve to miss either Mrs. Allen or John Thorpe, who, more than any other figure in Jane Austen's gallery, reminds us that her immediate predecessor was Miss Burney, and whose monstrous exaggerations and inventions are somehow made to suggest to us that Mrs. Radcliffe's persons and events are equally preposterous. Still, the most ardent lover of *Northanger Abbey* would hardly give it the first place among the novels, or, perhaps, deny that, however natural General Tilney's character may be, it is not quite easy to believe in his behaviour.[1]

Emma is a far more mature piece of work. It is the most vivacious of the later novels, and with some readers the first favourite. In plot-interest it is probably the strongest of the six, and, not to speak

[1] We do not know why *Northanger Abbey* was " put upon the shelf " : perhaps because Mrs. Radcliffe's novels were no longer popular. If Jane Austen had published it, I wonder whether she would have allowed John Thorpe to swear so freely.

of the more prominent persons, it contains, in Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Bates, two minor characters who resemble one another in being the object equally of our laughter and our unqualified respect and affection. Jane Austen, who is said to be a Shakespearian, never reminds us of Shakespeare, I think, in her full-dress portraits, but she does so in such characters as Miss Bates and Mrs. Allen. As for Mr. Woodhouse, whose most famous sentences hang like texts in frames on the four walls of our memories, he is, next to Don Quixote, perhaps the most perfect gentleman in fiction; and under outrageous provocation he remains so. This, I believe, is the severest thing he says in the story; it was said of Frank Churchill to the young man's stepmother:

"That young man (speaking lower) is very thoughtless. Do not tell his father, but that young man is not quite the thing. He has been opening the doors very often this evening, and keeping them open very inconsiderately. He does not think of the draught. I do not mean to set you against him, but indeed he is not quite the thing."

Emma is satisfactory on the more serious side of the story; but I will not dwell on that. In its main design it is a comedy, and, as a comedy, unsurpassed, I think, among novels, and all the better because Jane Austen does not affront us, like Meredith in *The Egoist*, by coming forward as interpreter. Most of the characters are involved in the contrast of reality and illusion, but it is concentrated on Emma. This young lady, who

is always surpassingly confident of being right, is always surpassingly wrong. She is reputed very clever, and she *is* clever ; and she never sees the fact and never understands herself. A spoiled child, with a good disposition and more will than most of the people in her little world, she begins to put this world to rights. She chooses for a friend, not Jane Fairfax her equal, but the amiable, soft, stupid, and adoring Harriet Smith. Her motive, which she supposes to be kindness, is the pleasure of patronage and management. She detaches Harriet's affections from a suitable lover, and fastens them on a person wholly unsuitable and perfectly indifferent. Convinced that she has won Mr. Elton for Harriet, she finds that, in fact, her operations have encouraged him to aspire to herself. Leaving Harriet, on the explosion of this bubble, to recover from her disappointment, she next chooses to fancy that she herself and Frank Churchill, who is coming to visit his father, are likely to fall in love ; while, in fact, he is coming solely because he is secretly engaged to Jane Fairfax. Without any reason she supposes Jane to be enamoured of somebody's husband, and imparts her suspicion, of all people, to Jane's lover. Having discovered that her own love for him was fictitious, she now encourages Harriet Smith to fall in love with him ; but, as she omits to mention his name, she succeeds, without knowing it, in attaching Harriet to Mr. Knightley instead. In her satisfaction at finding herself out of

love with Frank Churchill, and observing none of those signs of his relation to Jane Fairfax which are obvious to Mr. Knightley, she flirts outrageously with him, involves Jane in misery, and only escapes by accident from ruining the happiness of the pair. Finally, discovering to her dismay that she has led Harriet to raise her eyes to Knightley, and to raise them, in Harriet's opinion, not in vain, she also discovers, to her still greater dismay, that she loves Knightley herself, and then, to her delight, that she is beloved by him. She has reached a fact at last, but only by the benevolence of Fortune, who crowns her kindness by taking the heart of Harriet and flinging it, like a piece of putty, at her original lover. In a sketch like this the comedy of the story loses both its fun and its verisimilitude, but we know how delightful it is, and on the whole how true to human nature. Though we may not care for *Emma* most, I think the claim may fairly be made for it that, of all the novels, it most perfectly executes its design.

It has, so far as I see, but one serious defect. I do not mean the imperfections of the heroine. Few of us probably like Emma as well as two or three of her sister-heroines, and there are moments when she even repels us. That was necessary to the design, and she attracts us quite enough for its purpose. She has a generous nature. She is self-confident, and she likes to be first ; but she is not vain. She is faultless in her relations with her father ; and,

though she will not take advice from Knightley, her readiness to take reproof and to make amends for her errors is more than magnanimous. The weak point I referred to is the drawing of Jane Fairfax. She interests us much towards the end, and we feel that she is meant to be interesting from the first: but she cannot be so when we are allowed to see so little of her from within. There was, of course, a difficulty here; because her secret engagement is supposed to be a secret to the reader, and also because it makes her reserved towards the persons around her. But this is not all. The moralist in Jane Austen stood for once in her way. The secret engagement is, for her, so serious an offence that she is afraid to win our hearts for Jane until it has led to great unhappiness. This is to undervalue the reader. It is the same mistake that Tennyson made in dealing with Guinevere's love for Lancelot. The guilty queen must not be too interesting, and so, till she ceases to be guilty, she remains a nonentity. But great writers neither need, nor can afford, to be so timid.

Sense and Sensibility was, in effect, the earliest of the novels, for in its first version it preceded *Pride and Prejudice* (then called *First Impressions*). At that time (before 1796) it had the form of letters, like the novels of Richardson and Miss Burney. I have never met any one who preferred it to the other five,

and it is generally, and, I think, rightly, placed lowest in the list. There is a certain formality in the contrast between the two sisters, and also in the parallelism which makes each of them in love with a man who is not free. The heroine, too, though Jane Austen liked her (*Letters*, ii. 91), and though she wins our respect and sympathy, seems to me unattractive ; and it is difficult to take any interest at all in the hero. In the character of Willoughby, who is much more important, Jane Austen made a bolder essay than in those of her later semi-bad men ; but it is not very successful, and its very boldness is one of the signs of immaturity. Still, if *Elinor and Marianne* (the first version) was anything like our *Sense and Sensibility*, it was an achievement nothing less than astounding in a girl under twenty ; and if the finished work is inferior to the other novels, the gap seems widest on a first reading.

Sense and Sensibility is allied on one side to *Northanger Abbey*, and there is something of the effect of that novel in the serious aspect of the story of Marianne. At seventeen she is even more convinced than of old that she will never see a man whom she can really love. Within a month or two she meets her ideal, and is brought to death's door by its behaviour to her. And at nineteen she contentedly marries a man of thirty-five who wears a flannel waistcoat, and whom, in virtue of his advanced age, she had considered as necessarily dead to " all

acuteness of feeling and every exquisite form of enjoyment." Then there are scenes and minor characters worthy of Jane Austen at her best. The scene in which Mr. John Dashwood, the heir, with the help of his wife, and without any conscious insincerity, lowers his obligation to his sisters by degrees from £3,000 to occasional neighbourly acts which he never performs, is unsurpassed in all the novels, and excellently suited to the stage. It is characteristic that it comes in the second chapter. Nobody ever opened a novel or managed an exposition better than Jane Austen, who would deserve immortality if she had written only the first chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*. And there is dear, vulgar, warm-hearted Mrs. Jennings, who, in her pity for the love-lorn Marianne, remembers how nothing comforted her poor husband, when he had a touch of his old cholicky gout, like a glass of her finest old Constantia wine ; offers it as a cordial for a broken heart; and, returning to her natural hilarity, consoles herself for Willoughby's rejection of Marianne with the design of spiriting up Colonel Brandon to take his place, on the principle that one shoulder of mutton, you know, drives another down. Shakespeare has the same thought, though he puts it differently :

> As fire drives out fire, so pity pity ;

and he would have loved Mrs. Jennings. And there is her daughter, Mrs. Palmer, the ever-laughing Mrs.

Palmer, who finds it so droll that Mr. Palmer is always out of humour, and so droll that her geraniums are nipped by the frost, and her chickens stolen by the fox. She and her husband, I confess, remind one of a farce more than of Shakespeare, but I should like to see that farce. And there is Lady Middleton, whose children were even worse spoilt than Mary Musgrove's, and who made friends with Mrs. John Dashwood the moment they met. "There was a kind of cold-hearted selfishness on both sides which mutually attracted them; and they sympathized with each other in an insipid propriety of demeanour and a general want of understanding."

Among the faithful there is a disposition to regard *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park* as rivals for the first place, and to quarrel over them with some heat. There is something a little absurd about a competition of this kind, but I fancy the authoress would have enjoyed listening to it, and at any rate it may be made the vehicle of comparison and criticism. *Pride and Prejudice*, I imagine, is the most popular of all the novels, and many of its champions seem hardly to understand why *Mansfield Park* should be much admired. The friends of *Mansfield Park* are a more select body, and they quite understand the admiration of *Pride and Prejudice*. I shall not refer at length, therefore, to the merits of the latter, and, as for the issue, I will say at once

that I do not know which of the two is the best novel, though I know very well which I like the best.

There is every sign that in writing *Mansfield Park* Jane Austen regarded her work with unusual seriousness. This seriousness is, in part, moral, for she has deeply at heart the importance of certain truths about conduct which are embodied and occasionally enunciated in the novel. But it is at the same time artistic. She has produced a very solid and carefully considered scheme, a more organic scheme than in any other of her works. And she has bound herself to tell the truth. She renounces the pleasure of drawing semi-farcical characters ; and in Lady Bertram (as later in Mr. Woodhouse) she can scarcely be said even to exaggerate ; she merely insists on the most salient traits, without wholly excluding the rest. Again, the conception and development of some of the main characters, of the two Crawfords, perhaps of Edmund, and notably of Fanny Price as compared with Elizabeth Bennet, is exceptionally delicate and subtle. These epithets apply also to the manner in which the influence of character on character, and of circumstances on character, is depicted. Further, we meet neither with almost incredible situations, nor with inconsistencies of character, such as may be found in *Pride and Prejudice* : for to me, at least, it is impossible to imagine those ten days during which the Wickhams stayed with the Bennets, or to believe that the Darcy of the second half of the

novel could ever have behaved so totally unlike a gentleman as the Darcy of the dance where he first meets Elizabeth. And, finally, everywhere, in spite of the author's moral intentness, there is that justice to which I drew attention in the treatment of Mrs. Norris. We see, for example, that, though Henry Crawford is an habitual and unfeeling lady-killer, he is capable of sincere love; and no tenderness for Fanny prevents our being told that, in spite of her love for Edmund and her repugnance to Crawford, he must have succeeded in winning her affection if for a few months he could have denied himself the pleasure of flirtation. It must be admitted, I think, that in these respects—and they are of great importance—*Mansfield Park* is considerably superior to the youthful work, and superior in some degree to *Emma* and *Persuasion*; and it is probably true that, of all the novels, it gains the most from repeated study. It has, of course, many further merits, but I am touching only on those in regard to which a *superior* position could be claimed for it.

What can be said on the other side? In the first place, though, like all the novels, it is excellently written, *Mansfield Park* is not written with the animation and sparkle of *Pride and Prejudice*. Considering the difference between the two novels in tone and matter, this change was in some degree both natural and a positive merit; but then, as regards the tone and matter themselves, we may perhaps say

of *Mansfield Park* the very opposite of what Jane Austen said of the earlier work: "it wants shade; it wants to be stretched out here and there with a long chapter of sense." Secondly, *Mansfield Park* allows less scope to Jane Austen's humour than most, perhaps than any, of her other novels. One of her nieces remembered how aunt Jane, when on a visit to her brother, "would sit quietly working beside the fire in the library, saying nothing for a good while, and then would suddenly burst out laughing, jump up, and run across the room to a table where pens and paper were lying, write something down, and then come back to the fire and go on quietly working as before." [1] I doubt if this happened very frequently during the composition of *Mansfield Park*. There is often ironic humour in the presentment of the story and in the exhibition of Edmund's feelings. Both the Crawfords have themselves a pleasant vein of humour. We smile at Dr. Grant, at Mrs. Rushworth and her son; broadly at Mr. Yates, with wry faces at Mrs. Norris. But we "burst out laughing" only when we meet Lady Bertram. This again may be inevitable, and, because in keeping, may even be alleged as a merit; but is it not difficult to describe as Jane Austen's "best novel" one in which, for

[1] Hill, 202. For Jane Austen's criticism of *Pride and Prejudice*, see *Memoir*, 99. It was probably written while she was composing *Mansfield Park*. Perhaps her sense of the defects of the earlier novel may have driven her rather too far in the opposite direction.

however good a reason, Jane Austen's humour fails to have full play ?

Lastly, I will ask a question : Is there anybody in *Mansfield Park* for whom we care much, not as a study, but as a person ? I put this as a question, because undoubtedly there is one person, Fanny Price, for whom Jane Austen *means* us to care a great deal. " My Fanny," she calls her, in the novel itself, and I do not think any other person in her works receives such a compliment. But—I speak for myself because I am speaking for many others—though I know, not only from this, but from the whole tone of the narrative, what I am expected to feel for Fanny, and though I try to feel it, I make but a moderate success of the business. I pity, approve, respect, and admire her, but I neither desire her company nor am greatly concerned about her destiny, and she makes me impatient at moments when I doubt if she was meant to. Now if this is all my own fault, it is not the fault of *Mansfield Park* ; and there is a strong general probability, no doubt, that those who feel as a great writer meant them to feel, are in the right. But then in this matter I am one of a large and respectable band, and I am not convinced that we are wrong. In reading of Elizabeth Bennet, on the other hand, it is impossible for me to doubt either the author's intentions or my own feelings. I was meant to fall in love with her, and I do. Besides, I like her father and her elder sister

better than any one in *Mansfield Park*, and I prefer both Darcy and Bingley to the Rev. Edmund Bertram. On this side, therefore, as well as on the side of humour, I must put *Pride and Prejudice* first : and this side, surely, is very important. It is a great merit, that is, in a story that, besides admiring the characters as studies, you care for some of them as persons, and care very much for at least one.

Here, however, we have to meet a serious objection. For we shall be told that we are wrong in finding Elizabeth so delightful as we do ; because she has, in addition to that fault on which the plot depends, a very unattractive defect : she is pert or impertinent. And I must try to deal with this charge.

First of all we may remark that it is connected with something—arises, I should say, from a misunderstanding of something—which is a main source of her attractiveness. She has, in a very high degree, that spirit which is lacking in Elinor, Fanny, and Anne. She has more of it than Catherine, and quite as much of it as Emma ; and as she also has what they have not, the humour of Jane Austen herself, and as she is free from certain defects which are essential to Emma's story, she delights us. That is what all her friends say : we *delight* in her. Well, obviously, such a person might easily say things which could be misconstrued as impertinent even if they were not so. And accordingly this accusation

appears in the novel itself. It is brought against Elizabeth by Miss Bingley, and playfully it is brought by Elizabeth herself when she asks her lover if he admired her for her impertinence, and is answered : " for the liveliness of your mind I did." I think his version the true one.

Next we must observe that when Jane Austen put that charge into the mouth of Miss Bingley, Elizabeth's tasteless and spiteful rival, she was implicitly denying it ; and that she herself cannot have meant her heroine to be pert or impertinent. Her feeling for Elizabeth, which appears in the letters as well as in the novel, was of a very special kind. She had a tenderness, we saw, for Fanny Price. So she had, one feels as one reads, for Anne Elliot. Yet she wrote to a niece who was eager to see *Persuasion* : " You will not like it, so you need not be impatient. You may, perhaps, like the heroine, as she is almost too good for me." Of Emma she said : " I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like." But she wrote of Elizabeth—not in the glow of her first creation, but long after, in 1813, when the novel was about to appear : " I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like *her* at least I do not know." These are precisely the sentiments, the enthusiastic and resentful sentiments, of those for whom I speak. But who will believe that an impertinent girl could

have been for Jane Austen as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print ? [1]

Still, she may possibly have made Elizabeth impertinent without meaning to do so. And to prove the contrary is beyond human power. But I will ask, To *whom* is Elizabeth impertinent ? Surely no one can object to, or fail to exult in, her answers to Lady Catherine de Bourgh, that bullying old snob. After repeated and anxious search I can find no

[1] For these quotations see *Letters*, ii. 153, 300 ; *Memoir*, 98, 148. There are other passages which show her fondness for Elizabeth. When she goes to a picture-gallery, she finds " a small portrait of Mrs. Bingley, excessively like her—I went in hopes of seeing one of her sister, but there was no Mrs. Darcy . . . Mrs. Bingley's is exactly herself—size, shaped face, features, and sweetness ; there never was a greater likeness. She is dressed in a white gown, with green ornaments, which convinces me of what I had always supposed, that green was a favourite colour with her. I dare say Mrs. D. will be in yellow " (*Letters*, ii. 141 : cf. 143). Aunt Jane would tell her nephews and nieces " many little particulars about the subsequent career of some of her people." I will leave the reader to find examples in *Memoir*, 148. There also we learn that Edmund Bertram and Mr. Knightley were " two of her great favourites," but that she also said of them : " they are very far from being what I know English gentlemen often are."

I may add a word on another point. Occasionally, though very rarely, in the *Letters* we find descriptions of persons which remind us of characters in the novels. For example, she calls on Mrs. Milles, and says of her daughter : " Miss Milles was queer as usual, and provided us with plenty to laugh at. She undertook in *three words* to give us the history of Mrs. Scudamore's reconciliation, and then talked on about it for half an hour, using such odd expressions, and so foolishly minute, that I could hardly keep my countenance " (ii. 196). Miss Milles might be a piece—no more —of Miss Bates ; and we are told that Jane Austen " thought it quite fair to note peculiarities and weaknesses." But " it was her desire to create, not to reproduce," and to copy or caricature an individual was for her " an invasion of social proprieties " ; so that " her own relations never recognized any individual in her characters " (*Memoir*, 147).

colour for the charge except in one or two of her speeches to Darcy, especially in the scene where they are partners in a dance. Certainly, in one of these speeches, the words, if we take them alone, do sound impertinent ; but they sound so, I maintain, only because we take them alone. And that is the origin of the misunderstanding. That which, said seriously, is impertinent, need not be so if playfully said. We forget that these words form part of a conversation which, on Elizabeth's side, is throughout playful in tone. We forget to imagine the smile about her lips, and the dancing light in her eyes. And we forget what we were expressly told before, when she gave Darcy a defiant answer and rather expected him to be affronted : " there was a mixture of sweetness and archness in her manner which made it difficult for her to affront anybody." [1]

[1] The particular speech referred to is in ch. 18 and begins with the word " Both." It is useless to quote it without the context. If the charge against Elizabeth were, not that she was impertinent, but that she ought not to have used this tone of raillery in speaking to a person whom she disliked and condemned, I should agree with it. There is another accusation against her which perhaps I ought to mention. It is that the change of her feelings towards Darcy was caused by the sight of his house and grounds ! Jane Austen forestalled it by describing twice over, and minutely, the nature of the stages of this change. The passages are too long to quote : but she actually introduced the charge itself and added its refutation, and I will quote this. Jane, astonished at Elizabeth's acceptance of a man whom she was believed to dislike, begs for an assurance that her sister " feels what she ought to do." Elizabeth's reply, that she loves Darcy better than she does Bingley, does not satisfy Jane. " My dearest sister," she exclaims, " now *be*, be serious. I want to talk very seriously. Let me know everything that I am to know without delay. Will you

And now, to return for a moment to the question, "Which is the best novel, *Mansfield Park* or *Pride and Prejudice?*" I cannot answer it, any more than I can say which is Shakespeare's best drama. Each of the two has qualities in which it surpasses the other. Those in which *Mansfield Park* are superior are probably the more fundamental, and I could not think of asserting that *Pride and Prejudice* is the better novel, though I prefer it. But I do not merely prefer it; it seems to me to show us more of Jane Austen's genius. We could feel surer, from reading it, that the author would some day be able to write *Mansfield Park*, than, from reading *Mansfield Park*, that the author would ever be able to write *Pride and Prejudice*. And besides, if there is a "best novel" at all, are we so sure that it is not *Emma*?

Persuasion, written when Jane Austen's health had already begun to fail, was the last of the novels, and the mellowest. It is not equal to *Mansfield Park* or *Emma* on the sides where they are strongest; and the part in which Mr. Elliot, Mrs. Clay, and Mrs. Smith are the chief figures is, for Jane Austen, somewhat crude. Nor is *Persuasion* so entertaining as

tell me how long you have loved him?" The answer is: "It has been coming on so gradually that I hardly know when it began; but I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley." But what is the use of my quoting this? Any one capable of seriously making the charge will take this for a confession of its truth.

Pride and Prejudice and *Northanger Abbey*. But, to say nothing for the moment of its peculiar attraction, it seems to me to stand first for the balance of the humorous element and the interest of the love-story.

Admiral Croft is an instance of the value given to a novel by a person at once comical and lovable. Who has not blessed him for his praise of the Misses Musgrove: "And very nice young ladies they are; I hardly know one from another"? In her youth Jane Austen might have pushed into caricature the character of Sir Walter Elliot, with his family pride and personal vanity, and his incomparable criticisms on the hair and complexions of his relatives and acquaintances; but in *Persuasion* he is no less credible than original. His daughter Mary, whose "sore throats, you know, were always worse than anybody's," is another triumph. If Jane Austen ever suspected herself of growing sentimental over Anne, she took her revenge in the portrait of Mrs. Musgrove senior, with "her large fat sighings over the destiny of a son whom alive nobody had cared for,"[1] and her "extraordinary burst of mind" in remembering that he had served under Captain Wentworth. And the touch of comic irony falls on the most serious characters. The heroine herself does not escape. Lady Russell, who prides herself on her discernment of men, misjudges Captain Went-

[1] This fact is emphasized. If we do not notice it the passage, which has been censured, will certainly appear cruel.

worth first, and Mr. Elliot, far more grossly, afterwards, and is left with nothing else to do " than to admit that she had been pretty completely wrong, and take up a new set of opinions and of hopes." And then there is Captain Benwick, who supposes himself doomed to eternal melancholy by the death of his *fiancée*, and who, we perceive, would certainly fall in love with Anne within a week, and, because the week is wanting, falls in love with Louisa. This may sound cynical, but we are expressly told that he has an affectionate heart, and we fully believe it. His love for poor Miss Harville is not dead, and for that very reason has to fix itself on some other object. Probably Louisa found that for her husband she was more or less a double personality, half Miss Harville and half herself.

But humorous as *Persuasion* is, its special and distinctive charm lies elsewhere. The nature of the attraction appears in the fact that some readers, without admiring this novel the most, regard it with the most affection, and apply to it alone the epithet " beautiful." There are two sources of this effect. The heroine is treated with much sympathy and even with tenderness. This is true also of Fanny Price ; but, in addition, the love-story is handled much more decidedly than in the other novels as a romance. Elizabeth's love for Darcy grew out of esteem and gratitude ; it is none the worse for that, but it is not romantic, and if it had been thwarted, she would not

have become autumnal at twenty-seven like Anne. Nor is Emma's love for Knightley romantic; it is more or less proprietary. Even Fanny's love, which has much more resemblance to Anne's, is, like Emma's, a growth from childhood, and we know from the author that it was not invincible. But at nineteen Anne Elliot (I quote the novelist's expressions because they are unusual with her) fell "rapidly and deeply in love," and experienced "a short period of exquisite felicity"; and though she was persuaded to renounce her lover, her love could never be renounced or transferred. It could only wither the bloom of her beauty and the joy in her heart. And Jane Austen allowed herself to portray freely and, one may even say, poetically, both Anne's suffering and the vicissitudes of its passage into hope and the re-birth of youth and bliss. There is very little of this open romantic sympathy in the early novels. In *Mansfield Park* there is a good deal more. But in *Persuasion* it flows almost without restraint. I do not think she has anywhere earlier such a sentence as the second of these: "Prettier musings of high-wrought love and eternal constancy could never have passed along the streets of Bath than Anne was sporting with from Camden Place to Westgate Buildings. It was almost enough to spread purification and perfume all the way." And those speeches of Anne's in her conversation with Captain Harville, the overhearing of which produces the *dénouement*,

form the only passage in Jane Austen's works which I could honestly describe as "moving"—moving from the mingled sense of pathos and beauty.[1] This sweetest grace was added to all her other gifts but a year before her death; and in *Persuasion* too, as, some years earlier, in *Mansfield Park*, she disclosed without reserve that love of nature which was really one of her strongest feelings. She had been, I think, a little too much held in check by her keen sense of the absurdities of affectation and mere sentiment. If she had lived longer the fundamental character of her mind would not have changed, but we should have known it more fully and perhaps have seen that she was nearer to the poets of her time than she now appears.[2]

[1] The *dénouement* was originally contained in a single chapter (printed in the *Memoir*). It did not satisfy the author, who cancelled it and wrote the two very different chapters which appear in the novel. The change was an immense improvement.

[2] I add a few words as to Jane Austen's love of nature. Miss Hill (*op. cit.* 91) quotes from a family MS.: "She loved the country, and her delight in natural scenery was such that she would sometimes say it must form one of the delights of heaven." From the same source we learn that, when suddenly told of her father's decision to leave Steventon, their home in the country, and reside in Bath, she fainted away; a fact which I mention with some compunctions, for she would have been horrified by the idea that this proof of her "sensibility" would some day be made public. Her love of nature is not difficult to trace in the early novels, but it is not freely expressed. She makes Marianne say: "admiration of landscape scenery is become a mere jargon. Everybody pretends to feel and tries to describe with the taste and elegance of him who first defined what picturesque beauty was. I detest jargon of every kind, and sometimes I have kept my feelings to myself, because I could find no language to describe them in but was worn and hackneyed out of all sense and meaning" (*Sense*

and Sensibility, ch. 18). There is much more of interest in this passage, which should be compared with the fun about the picturesque in *Northanger Abbey*, ch. 14. The place in *Mansfield Park* which I had specially in mind is in ch. 11, where Fanny, gazing from the window at " the scene without, where all that was solemn and soothing and lovely appeared in the brilliancy of an unclouded night, and the contrast of the deep shades of the woods," exclaims : " Here's harmony ! Here's repose ! Here's what may leave all painting and all music behind, and what poetry only can attempt to describe ! Here's what may tranquillize every care, and lift the heart to rapture ! When I look out on such a night as this, I feel as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world ; and there certainly would be less of both if the sublimity of nature were more attended to, and people were carried more out of themselves by contemplating such a scene." The reader will recall the description in *Persuasion* of the country around Lyme Regis, and the references to Anne's love of autumn, " that season of peculiar and inexhaustible influence on the mind of taste and tenderness," an influence " so sweet and so sad." It may not be an accident that Jane Austen wrote her first three novels at Steventon, wrote almost nothing while she lived at Bath and Southampton (1801-9), and began to write again as soon as she went to Chawton. I do not mean that her absence from the country is likely to have been the sole cause of her silence during those eight years, but it may well have been one cause.

CORIOLANUS

BRITISH ACADEMY SHAKESPEARE LECTURE, 1912

Coriolanus [1] is beyond doubt among the latest of Shakespeare's tragedies: there is some reason for thinking it the last. Like all those that succeeded *Hamlet*, it is a tragedy of vehement passion; and in none of them are more striking revolutions of fortune displayed. It is full of power, and almost every one feels it to be a noble work. We may say of it, as of its hero, that, if not one of Shakespeare's greatest creations, it is certainly one of his biggest.

Nevertheless, it is scarcely popular. It is seldom acted, and perhaps no reader ever called it his

[1] Shakespeare's treatment of his subject is often best understood through comparison with his authority, Plutarch's Life of Coriolanus in North's translation, a translation most conveniently read in the volume edited by Prof. Skeat and entitled *Shakespeare's Plutarch*. For a full development of the comparison, and, generally, for a discussion of the play much more complete than mine could be, see Prof. MacCallum's book, *Shakespeare's Roman Plays and their Background* (1910), which is admirable both for its thoroughness and for the insight and justice of its criticism. I should perhaps add that, though I read the greater part of Prof. MacCallum's book when it appeared, I was prevented from going on to the chapters on *Coriolanus*, and did so only after writing my lecture. I left untouched in the lecture the many observations which this reading confirmed, but on one or two doubtful points I have added a Postscript.

favourite play. Indeed, except for educational purposes, it is probably, after *Timon*, the least generally read of the tragedies. Even the critic who feels bound to rank it above *Romeo and Juliet*, and even above *Julius Caesar*, may add that he prefers those dramas all the same ; and if he ignores his personal preferences, still we do not find him asking whether it is not the equal of the four great tragedies. He may feel this doubt as to *Antony and Cleopatra*, but not as to *Coriolanus*.

The question why this should be so will at once tell us something about the drama. We cannot say that it shows any decline in Shakespeare's powers, though in parts it may show slackness in their use. It has defects, some of which are due to the historical material ; but all the tragedies have defects, and the material of *Antony and Cleopatra* was even more troublesome. There is no love-story ; but then there is none in *Macbeth*, and next to none in *King Lear*. Thanks in part to the badness of the Folio text, the reader is impeded by obscurities of language and irritated by the mangling of Shakespeare's metre ; yet these annoyances would not much diminish the effect of *Othello*. It may seem a more serious obstacle that the hero's faults are repellent and chill our sympathy ; but Macbeth, to say nothing of his murders, is a much less noble being than Coriolanus. All this doubtless goes for something ; yet there must be some further reason why this drama stands apart

from the four great tragedies and *Antony and Cleopatra*. And one main reason seems to be this. Shakespeare could construe the story he found only by conceiving the hero's character in a certain way ; and he had to set the whole drama in tune with that conception. In this he was, no doubt, perfectly right ; but he closed the door on certain effects, in the absence of which his whole power in tragedy could not be displayed. He had to be content with something less, or rather with something else ; and so have we.

Most of the great tragedies leave a certain imaginative impression of the highest value, which I describe in terms intended merely to recall it. What we witness is not the passion and doom of mere individuals. The forces that meet in the tragedy stretch far beyond the little group of figures and the tiny tract of space and time in which they appear. The darkness that covers the scene, and the light that strikes across it, are more than our common night and day. The hero's fate is, in one sense, intelligible, for it follows from his character and the conditions in which he is placed ; and yet everything, character, conditions, and issue, is mystery. Now of this effect there is very little in *Coriolanus*. No doubt the story has a universal meaning, since the contending forces are permanent constituents of human nature ; but that peculiar *imaginative* effect or atmosphere is hardly felt. And, thinking of the play, we notice that the

means by which it is produced elsewhere are almost absent here. One of these means is the use of the supernatural; another a treatment of nature which makes her appear not merely as a background, nor even merely as a conscious witness of human feelings, sufferings, and deeds, but as a vaster fellow-actor and fellow-sufferer. Remove in fancy from *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and *Macbeth* all that appeals to imagination through these means, and you find them utterly changed, but brought nearer to *Coriolanus*. Here Shakespeare has deliberately withdrawn his hand from those engines. He found, of course, in Plutarch allusions to the gods, and some of these he used; but he does not make us feel that the gods take part in the story. He found also wonders in the firmament, portents, a strange vision seen by a slave, a statue that spoke. He found that the Romans in their extremity sent the priests, augurs, and soothsayers to plead with Coriolanus; and that the embassy of the women which saved Rome was due to a thought which came suddenly to Valeria, which she herself regarded as a divine inspiration, and on the nature of which Plutarch speculates. But the whole of this Shakespeare ignored. Nor would he use that other instrument I spoke of. Coriolanus was not the man to be terrified by twilight, or to feel that the stars or the wind took part against or with him. If Lear's thunderstorm had beat upon his head, he would merely have set his teeth. And not only is the

mystery of nature absent ; she is scarcely present even as a background. The hero's grim description of his abode in exile as " the city of kites and crows " (it is not in Plutarch) is almost all we have. In short, *Coriolanus* has scarcely more atmosphere, either supernatural or natural, than the average serious prose drama of to-day.

In Shakespeare's greatest tragedies there is a second source—in one or two the chief source—of supreme imaginative appeal, the exhibition of inward conflict, or of the outburst of one or another passion, terrible, heart-rending, or glorious to witness. At these moments the speaker becomes the greatest of poets ; and yet, the dramatic convention admitted, he speaks in character. The hero in *Coriolanus* is never thus the greatest of poets, and he could not be so without a breach of more than dramatic convention. His nature is large, simple, passionate ; but (except in one point, to which I will return, as it is irrelevant here) his nature is not, in any marked degree, imaginative. He feels all the rapture, but not, like Othello, all the poetry, of war. He covets honour no less than Hotspur, but he has not Hotspur's vision of honour. He meets with ingratitude, like Timon, but it does not transfigure all mankind for him. He is very eloquent, but his only free eloquence is that of vituperation and scorn. It is sometimes more than eloquence, it is splendid poetry ; but it is never such magical poetry as we hear in the four greatest

tragedies. Then, too, it lies in his nature that his deepest and most sacred feeling, that for his mother, is almost dumb. It governs his life and leads him uncomplaining towards death, but it cannot speak. And, finally, his inward conflicts are veiled from us. The change that came when he found himself alone and homeless in exile is not exhibited. The result is partly seen in the one soliloquy of this drama, but the process is hidden. Of the passion that possesses him when his triumph seems at hand we get a far more vivid idea from the words of Cominius than from any words of his own :

> I tell you he does sit in gold, his eye
> Red as 'twould burn Rome.

In the most famous scene, when his fate is being decided, only one short sentence reveals the gradual loosening of his purpose during his mother's speech. The actor's face and hands and bearing must show it, not the hero's voice ; and his submission is announced in a few quiet words, deeply moving and impressive, but destitute of the effect we know elsewhere of a lightning-flash that rends the darkness and discloses every cranny of the speaker's soul. All this we can see to be as it should be, but it does set limits to the flight of Shakespeare's imagination.

I have spoken of something that we miss in *Coriolanus*. Unfortunately there is something which a good many readers find, or think they find, and

which makes it distasteful to them. A political conflict is never the centre of interest in Shakespeare's plays, but in the historical plays it is an element more or less essential, and in this one it is very prominent. Here, too, since it may be plausibly described as a conflict between people and nobles, or democracy and aristocracy, the issue is felt to be still alive. And Shakespeare, it is thought, shows an animus, and sides against the people. A hundred years ago Hazlitt, dealing with this tragedy, wrote: "Shakespeare himself seems to have had a leaning to the arbitrary side of the question, perhaps from some feeling of contempt for his own origin; and to have spared no occasion of baiting the rabble. What he says of them is very true; what he says of their betters is also very true, though he dwells less upon it." This language is very tentative aud mild compared with that of some later writers. According to one, Shakespeare "loathed the common Englishman." He was a neuropath who could not endure the greasy aprons and noisome breath of mechanics, and "a snob of the purest English water." According to another, he was probably afflicted for some years with an "enormous self-esteem." A hero similarly afflicted, and a nauseous mob—behold the play!

I do not propose to join this dance, or even to ask whether any reasonable conjecture as to Shakespeare's political views and feelings could be formed from the study of this play and of others. But it

may be worth while to mention certain questions which should be weighed by any one who makes the adventure. Are not the chief weaknesses and vices shown by the populace, or attributed to it by speakers, in these plays, those with which it had been habitually charged in antiquity and the Middle Ages ; and did not Shakespeare find this common form, if nowhere else, in Plutarch ? Again, if these traits and charges are heightened in his dramas, what else do we expect in drama, and especially in that of the Elizabethans ? Granted, next, that in Shakespeare the people play a sorry political part, is that played by English nobles and Roman patricians much more glorious or beneficent ; and if, in Hazlitt's phrase, Shakespeare says more of the faults of the people than of those of their betters, would we have him give to humble unlettered persons the powers of invective of lordly orators ? Further, is abuse of the people ever dramatically inappropriate in Shakespeare ; and is it given to Henry the Fifth, or Brutus (who had some cause for it), or, in short, to any of the most attractive characters ? Is there not, besides, a great difference between his picture of the people taken as individuals, even when they talk politics, and his picture of them as a crowd or mob ? Is not the former, however humorously critical, always kindly ; and is a personal bias really needed to account for the latter ? And, to end a catalogue easy to prolong, might not that talk, which is scarcely peculiar to Shakespeare,

about greasy caps and offensive odours, have some other origin than his artistic nerves? He had, after all, some little gift of observation, and, when first he mixed with a class above his own, might he not resemble a son of the people now who, coming among his betters, observes with amusement the place held in their decalogue by the morning bath? I do not for a moment suggest that, by weighing such questions as these, we should be led to imagine Shakespeare as any more inclined to champion the populace than Spenser or Hooker or Bacon; but I think we should feel it extremely hazardous to ascribe to him any political feelings at all, and ridiculous to pretend to certainty on the subject.

Let us turn to the play. The representation of the people, whatever else it may be, is part of a dramatic design. This design is based on the main facts of the story, and these imply a certain character in the people and the hero. Since the issue is tragic, the conflict between them must be felt to be unavoidable and wellnigh hopeless. The necessity for dramatic sympathy with both sides demands that on both there should be some right and some wrong, both virtues and failings; and if the hero's monstrous purpose of destroying his native city is not to extinguish our sympathy, the provocation he receives must be great. This being so, the picture of the people is, surely, no darker than it had to be; the desired result would have been more easily secured

by making it darker still. And one must go further. As regards the political situation the total effect of the drama, it appears to me, is this. The conflict of hero and people is hopeless; but it is he alone who makes the conflict of patricians and plebeians, I do not say hopeless, but in any high degree dangerous. The people have bad faults, but no such faults as, in his absence, would prevent a constitutional development in their favour.

I will not try to describe their character, but I will illustrate this statement by comparing two accusations of their opponents with the facts shown; for these we must accept, but the accusations we must judge for ourselves. In the first scene the people are called cowards, both by the hero and by their friendly critic Menenius. Now there is no sign that they possess the kind of courage expected of gentlemen, or feel the corresponding shame if their courage fails. But if they were cowards, how could Rome be standing where we see it stand? They are the common soldiers of Rome. And when we see them in war, what do we find? One division, under Cominius, meets the Volscians in the field; the other, under Coriolanus, assaults Corioli. Both are beaten back. This is what Cominius says to his men:

> Breathe you, my friends: well fought: we are come off
> Like Romans, neither foolish in our stands,
> Nor cowardly in retire.

Nothing hints that the other division has not fought

well or was cowardly in retire ; but it was encouraged beforehand with threats, and, on its failure, with a torrent of curses and abuse. Nevertheless it advances again and forces the enemy to the gates, which Coriolanus enters, calling on his men to follow him.

> *First Sol.* Fool-hardiness ; not I.
> *Second Sol.* Nor I.
> *First Sol.* See, they have shut him in.
> *All.* To the pot, I warrant him.

Disgusting, no doubt ; but the answer to threats and curses. They would not have served Cominius so ; and indeed, when Lartius comes up and merely suggests to them to " fetch off " the re-appearing hero, they respond at once and take the city. These men are not cowards ; but their conduct depends on their leaders. The same thing is seen when Coriolanus himself appeals to the other division for volunteers to serve in the van. For once he appeals nobly, and the whole division volunteers.

Another charge he brings against the people is that they can neither rule nor be ruled. On this his policy of " thorough " is based. Now, judging from the drama, one would certainly say that they could not rule alone,—that a pure democracy would lead to anarchy, and perhaps to foreign subjection. And one would say also that they probably could not be ruled by the patricians if all political rights were denied them. But to rule them, while granting them

a place in the constitution, would seem quite feasible. They are, in fact, only too easy to guide. No doubt, collected into a mob, led by demagogues, and maddened by resentment and fear, they become wild and cruel. It is true, also, that, when their acts bear bitter fruit, they disclaim responsibility and turn on their leaders: "that we did, we did for the best; and though we willingly consented to his banishment, yet it was against our will." But they not only follow their tribunes like sheep; they receive abuse and direction submissively from any one who shows goodwill. They are fundamentally good-natured, like the Englishmen they are, and have a humorous consciousness of their own weaknesses. They are, beyond doubt, mutable, and in that sense untrustworthy; but they are not by nature ungrateful, or slow to admire their bitterest enemy. False charges and mean imputations come from their leaders, not from them. If one of them blames Coriolanus for being proud, another says he cannot help his pride. They insist on the bare form of their right to name him consul, but all they want is the form, and not the whole even of that. When he asks one of them, "Well then, I pray, your price of the consulship?" the answer, "The price is to ask it kindly," ought to have melted him at once; yet when he asks it contemptuously it is still granted. Even later, when the arts of the tribunes have provoked him to such a storm of defiant and revolutionary speech that both

the consulship and his life are in danger, one feels that another man might save both with no great trouble. Menenius tells him that the people

> have pardons, being ask'd, as free
> As words to little purpose.

His mother and friends urge him to deceive the people with false promises. But neither false promises nor apologies are needed, only a little humanity and some acknowledgement that the people are part of the state. He is capable of neither, and so the conflict is hopeless. But it is so not because the people, or even the tribunes, are what they are, but because he is what we call an " impossible " person.

The result is that all the force and nobility of Rome's greatest man have to be thrown away and wasted. That is tragic ; and it is doubly so because it is not only his faults that make him impossible. There is bound up with them a nobleness of nature in which he surpasses every one around him.

We see this if we consider, what is not always clear to the reader, his political position. It is not shared by any of the other patricians who appear in the drama. Critics have called him a Tory or an ultra-Tory ; but the tribune who calls him a " traitorous innovator " is quite as near the mark. The people have been granted tribunes. The tribunate is a part of the constitution, and it is accepted, with whatever reluctance, by the other patricians. But Coriolanus

would abolish it, and that not by law but by the sword. Nor would this content him. The right of the people to control the election of the consul is no new thing ; it is an old traditional right ; but it too, he says, might well be taken away. The only constitution tolerable in his eyes is one where the patricians are the state, and the people a mere instrument to feed it and fight for it. It is this conviction that makes it so dangerous to appoint him consul, and also makes it impossible for him to give way. Even if he could ask pardon for his abuse of the people, he could not honestly promise to acknowledge their political rights.

Now the nobleness of his nature is at work here. He is not tyrannical ; the charge brought against him of aiming at a tyranny is silly. He is an aristocrat. And Shakespeare has put decisively aside the statement of Plutarch that he was " churlish, uncivil, and altogether unfit for any man's conversation." Shakespeare's hero, though he feels his superiority to his fellow-patricians, always treats them as equals. He is never rude or over-bearing. He speaks to them with the simple directness or the bluff familiarity of a comrade. He does not resent their advice, criticism, or reproof. He shows no trace of envy or jealousy, or even of satisfaction at having surpassed them. The suggestion of the tribunes that he is willing to serve under Cominius because failure in war will be credited to Cominius,

and success in war to himself, shows only the littleness of their own minds. The patricians are his fellows in a community of virtue—of a courage, fidelity, and honour, which cannot fail them because they are " true-bred," though the bright ideal of such virtue become perfect still urges them on. But the plebeians, in his eyes, are destitute of this virtue, and therefore have no place in this community. All they care for is food in peace, looting in war, flattery from their demagogues ; and they will not even clean their teeth. To ask anything of them is to insult not merely himself but the virtues that he worships. To give them a real share in citizenship is treason to Rome ; for Rome means these virtues. They are not Romans, they are the rats of Rome.

He is very unjust to them, and his ideal, though high, is also narrow. But he is magnificently true to it, and even when he most repels us we feel this and glory in him. He is never more true to it than when he tries to be false ; and this is the scene where his superiority in nobleness is most apparent. He, who had said of his enemy, " I hate him worse than a promise-breaker," is urged to save himself and his friends by promises that he means to break. To his mother's argument that he ought no more to mind deceiving the people than outwitting an enemy in war, he cannot give the obvious answer, for he does not really count the people his fellow-countrymen ; but the proposal that *he* should descend to lying or

flattering astounds him. He feels that if he does so he will never be himself again; that his mind will have taken on an inherent baseness and no mere simulated one. And he is sure, as we are, that he simply cannot do what is required of him. When at last he consents to try, it is solely because his mother bids him and he cannot resist her chiding. Often he reminds us of a huge boy; and here he acts like a boy whose sense of honour is finer than his mother's, but who is too simple and too noble to frame the thought.

Unfortunately he is altogether too simple and too ignorant of himself. Though he is the proudest man in Shakespeare he seems to be unaware of his pride, and is hurt when his mother mentions it. It does not prevent him from being genuinely modest, for he never dreams that he has attained the ideal he worships; yet the sense of his own greatness is twisted round every strand of this worship. In almost all his words and deeds we are conscious of the tangle. I take a single illustration. He cannot endure to be praised. Even his mother, who has a charter to extol her blood, grieves him when she praises him. As for others,

> I had rather have one scratch my head i' the sun
> When the alarum were struck, than idly sit
> To hear my nothings monster'd.

His answer to the roar of the army hailing him "Coriolanus" is, "I will go wash." His wounds are "scratches with briars." In Plutarch he shows them

to the people without demur ; in Shakespeare he would rather lose the consulship. There is a greatness in all this that makes us exult. But who can assign the proportions of the elements that compose this impatience of praise : the feeling (which we are surprised to hear him express) that he, like hundreds more, has simply done what he could ; the sense that it is nothing to what might be done ; the want of human sympathy (for has not Shelley truly said that fame is love disguised ?) ; the pride which makes him feel that he needs no recognition, that after all he himself could do ten times as much, and that to praise his achievement implies a limit to his power ? If any one could solve this problem, Coriolanus certainly could not. To adapt a phrase in the play, he has no more introspection in him than a tiger. So he thinks that his loathing of the people is all disgust at worthlessness, and his resentment in exile all a just indignation. So too he fancies that he can stand

> As if a man were author of himself
> And knew no other kin,

while in fact public honour and home affections are the breath of his nostrils, and there is not a drop of stoic blood in his veins.

What follows on his exile depends on this self-ignorance. When he bids farewell to his mother and wife and friends he is still excited and exalted by conflict. He comforts them ; he will take no com-

panion ; he will be loved when he is lacked, or at least he will be feared ; while he remains alive, they shall always hear from him, and never aught but what is like him formerly. But the days go by, and no one, not even his mother, hears a word. When we see him next, he is entering Antium to offer his services against his country. If they are accepted, he knows what he will do ; he will burn Rome.

As I have already remarked, Shakespeare does not exhibit to us the change of mind which issues in this frightful purpose ; but from what we see and hear later we can tell how he imagined it ; and the key lies in that idea of *burning* Rome. As time passes, and no suggestion of recall reaches Coriolanus, and he learns what it is to be a solitary homeless exile, his heart hardens, his pride swells to a mountainous bulk, and the wound in it becomes a fire. The fellow-patricians from whom he parted lovingly now appear to him ingrates and dastards, scarcely better than the loathsome mob. Somehow, he knows not how, even his mother and wife have deserted him. He has become nothing to Rome, and Rome shall hear nothing from him. Here in solitude he can find no relief in a storm of words ; but gradually the blind intolerable chaos of resentment conceives and gives birth to a vision, not merely of battle and indiscriminate slaughter, but of the whole city one tower of flame. To see that with his bodily eyes would satisfy his soul ; and the way to the sight is through the

Volscians. If he is killed the moment they recognize him, he cares little : better a dead nothing than the living nothing Rome thinks him. But if he lives, she shall know what he is. He bears himself among the Volscians with something that resembles self-control ; but what controls him is the vision that never leaves him and never changes, and his eye is red with its glare when he sits in his state before the doomed city.[1]

This is Shakespeare's idea, not Plutarch's. In Plutarch there is not a syllable about the burning of Rome. Coriolanus (to simplify a complicated story) intends to humiliate his country by forcing on it disgraceful terms of peace. And this, apart from its moral quality, is a reasonable design. The Romans, rather than yield to fear, decline to treat unless peace is first restored ; and therefore it will be necessary to assault the city. In the play we find a single vague allusion to some unnamed conditions which, Coriolanus knows, cannot now be accepted ; but everywhere, among both Romans and Volscians, we hear of the burning of Rome, and in the city there is no hope of successful resistance. What Shakespeare wanted was a simpler and more appalling situation than he found in Plutarch, and a hero enslaved by his passion and driven blindly forward. How blindly, we may judge if we ask the questions : what will happen to the hero if he disappoints the expectation he has raised among the Volscians, when their leader

[1] See Postscript.

is preparing to accuse him even if he fulfils it : and, if the hero executes his purpose, what will happen to his mother, wife, and child : and how can it be executed by a man whom we know in his home as the most human of men, a husband who is still the lover of his wife, and a son who regards his mother not merely with devoted affection but with something like religious awe ? Very likely the audience in the theatre was not expected to ask these questions, but it *was* expected to see in the hero a man totally ignorant of himself, and stumbling to the destruction either of his life or of his soul.

In speaking of the famous scene where he is confronted with Volumnia and Valeria, Virgilia and her boy, and the issue is decided, I am obliged to repeat what I have said elsewhere in print [1] ; and I must speak in the first person because I do not know how far others share my view. To me the scene is one in which the tragic feelings of fear and pity have little place. Such anxiety as I feel is not for the fate of the hero or of any one else : it is, to use religious language, for the safety of his soul. And when he yields, though I know, as he divines, that his life is lost, the emotion I feel is not pity : he is above pity and above life. And the anxiety itself is but slight : it bears no resemblance to the hopes and fears that agitate us as we approach the end in *Othello* or *King Lear*. The whole scene affects me, to exaggerate a

[1] *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 84.

little, more as a majestic picture of stationary figures than as the fateful climax of an action speeding to its close. And the structure of the drama seems to confirm this view. Almost throughout the first three Acts—that is, up to the banishment—we have incessant motion, excited and resounding speech, a violent oscillation of fortunes. But, after this, the dramatic tension is suddenly relaxed, and, though it increases again, it is never allowed to approach its previous height. If Shakespeare had wished it to do so in this scene, he had only to make us wait in dread of some interposition from Aufidius, at which the hero's passion might have burst into a fury fatal even to the influence of Volumnia. But our minds are crossed by no shadow of such dread. From the moment when he catches sight of the advancing figures, and the voice of nature—what he himself calls " great nature "—begins to speak in his heart long before it speaks aloud to his ear, we know the end. And all this is in harmony with that characteristic of the drama which we noticed at first,—we feel but faintly, if at all, the presence of any mysterious or fateful agency. We are witnessing only the conquest of passion by simple human feelings, and *Coriolanus* is as much a drama of reconciliation as a tragedy. That is no defect in it, but it is a reason why it cannot leave the same impression as the supreme tragedies, and should be judged by its own standard.

A tragedy it is, for the passion is gigantic, and it leads to the hero's death. But the catastrophe scarcely diminishes the influence of the great scene. Since we know that his nature, though the good in it has conquered, remains unchanged, and since his rival's plan is concerted before our eyes, we wait with little suspense, almost indeed with tranquillity, the certain end. As it approaches it is felt to be the more inevitable because the steps which lead to it are made to repeat as exactly as possible the steps which led to his exile. His task, as then, is to excuse himself, a task the most repugnant to his pride. Aufidius, like the tribunes then, knows how to render its fulfilment impossible. He hears a word of insult, the same that he heard then,—" traitor." It is followed by a sneer at the most sacred tears he ever shed, and a lying description of their effect on the bystanders ; and his pride, and his loathing of falsehood and meanness, explode, as before, in furious speech. For a moment he tries to check himself and appeals to the senators ; but the effort seems only to treble his rage. Though no man, since Aufidius spoke, has said a word against him, he defies the whole nation, recalling the day of its shame and his own triumph, when alone, like an eagle. he fluttered the dovecotes in Corioli. The people, who had accompanied him to the market-place, splitting the air with the noise of their enthusiasm, remember their kinsfolk whom he slaughtered, change sides, and

clamour for his death. As he turns on Aufidius, the conspirators rush upon him, and in a moment, before the vision of his glory has faded from his brain, he lies dead. The instantaneous cessation of enormous energy (which is like nothing else in Shakespeare) strikes us with awe, but not with pity. As I said, the effect of the preceding scene, where he conquered something stronger than all the Volscians and escaped something worse than death, is not reversed; it is only heightened by a renewed joy in his greatness. Roman and Volscian will have peace now, and in his native city patrician and plebeian will move along the way he barred. And they are in life, and he is not. But life has suddenly shrunk and dwindled, and become a home for pygmies and not for him.[1]

Dr. Johnson observed that "the tragedy of *Coriolanus* is one of the most amusing of our author's performances." By "amusing" he did not mean "mirth-provoking"; he meant that in *Coriolanus* a

[1] I have tried to indicate the effect at which Shakespeare's imagination seems to have aimed. I do not say that the execution is altogether adequate. And some readers, I know, would like Coriolanus to die fighting. Shakespeare's idea is probably to be gathered from the hero's appeal to the senators to judge between Aufidius and him, and from the word "lawful" in the last speech:

> O that I had him,
> With six Aufidiuses, or more, his tribe,
> To use my lawful sword!

He is not before the people only, but before the senators, his fellow-patricians, though of another city. Besides—if I may so put it—if Coriolanus were allowed to fight at all, he would have to annihilate the whole assembly.

lively interest is excited and sustained by the variety of the events and characters ; and this is true. But we may add that the play contains a good deal that is amusing in the current sense of the word—more of this, it has been observed, than do the other Roman tragedies. When the people appear as individuals they are frequently more or less comical. Shakespeare always enjoyed the inconsequence of the uneducated mind, and its tendency to express a sound meaning in an absurd form. Again, the talk of the servants with one another and with the muffled hero, and the conversation of the sentinels with Menenius, are amusing. There is a touch of comedy in the contrast between Volumnia and Virgilia when we see them on occasions not too serious. And then, not only at the beginning, as in Plutarch, but throughout the story we meet with that pleasant and wise old gentleman Menenius, whose humour tells him how to keep the peace while he gains his point, and to say without offence what the hero cannot say without raising a storm. Perhaps no one else in the play is regarded from beginning to end with such unmingled approval, and this is not lessened when the failure of his embassy to Coriolanus makes him the subject as well as the author of mirth. If we regard the drama from this point of view we find that it differs from almost all the tragedies, though it has a certain likeness to *Antony and Cleopatra*. What is amusing in it is, for the most part, simply amusing, and has no

tragic tinge. It is not like the gibes of Hamlet at Polonius, or the jokes of the clown who, we remember, is digging Ophelia's grave, or that humour of Iago which for us is full of menace ; and who could dream of comparing it with the jesting of Lear's fool ? Even that Shakespearean audacity, the interruption of Volumnia's speech by the hero's little son, makes one laugh almost without reserve. And all this helps to produce the characteristic tone of this tragedy.

The drawing of the character of Aufidius seems to me by far the weakest spot in the drama. At one place, where Aufidius moralizes on the banishment of the hero, Shakespeare, it appears to some critics, is himself delivering a speech which tells the audience nothing essential and ends in desperate obscurity.[1] Two other speeches have been criticized. In the first, Aufidius, after his defeat in the field, declares that, since he cannot overcome his rival in fair fight, he will do it in any way open to him, however dishonourable. The other is his lyrical cry of rapture when Coriolanus discloses himself in the house at Antium. The intention in both cases is clear. Aufidius is contrasted with the hero as a man of much slighter and less noble nature, whose lively impulses, good and bad, quickly give way before a new influence, and whose action is in the end determined by the permanent pressure of ambition and

[1] But Prof. MacCallum's defence of this passage is perhaps successful (Appendix F).

rivalry. But he is a man of straw. He was wanted merely for the plot, and in reading some passages in his talk we seem to see Shakespeare yawning as he wrote. Besides, the unspeakable baseness of his sneer at the hero's tears is an injury to the final effect. Such an emotion as mere disgust is out of place in a tragic close ; but I confess I feel nothing but disgust as Aufidius speaks the last words, except some indignation with the poet who allowed him to speak them, and an unregenerate desire to see the head and body of the speaker lying on opposite sides of the stage.

Though this play is by no means a drama of destiny we might almost say that Volumnia is responsible for the hero's life and death. She trained him from the first to aim at honour in arms, to despise pain, and to

> forget that ever
> He heard the name of death ;

to strive constantly to surpass himself, and to regard the populace with inhuman disdain as

> things created
> To buy and sell with groats.

Thus she led him to glory and to banishment. And it was she who, in the hour of trial, brought him to sacrifice his pride and his life.

Her sense of personal honour, we saw, was less keen than his ; but she was much more patriotic. We feel this superiority even in the scene that reveals the

defect ; in her last scene we feel it alone. She has idolized her son ; but, whatever motive she may appeal to in her effort to move him, it is not of him she thinks ; her eyes look past him and are set on Rome. When, in yielding, he tells her that she has won a happy victory for her country, but a victory most dangerous, if not most mortal, to her son, she answers nothing. And her silence is sublime.

These last words would be true of Plutarch's Volumnia. But in Plutarch, though we hear of the son's devotion, and how he did great deeds to delight his mother, neither his early passion for war nor his attitude to the people is attributed to her influence, and she has no place in the action until she goes to plead with him. Hence she appears only in majesty, while Shakespeare's Volumnia has a more varied part to play. She cannot be majestic when we see her hurrying through the streets in wild exultation at the news of his triumph ; and where, angrily conquering her tears, she rails at the authors of his banishment, she can hardly be called even dignified. What Shakespeare gains by her animation and vehemence in these scenes is not confined to them. He prepares for the final scene a sense of contrast which makes it doubly moving and impressive.

In Volumnia's great speech he is much indebted to Plutarch, and it is, on the whole, in the majestic parts that he keeps most close to his authority. The open appeal to affection is his own ; and so are the touches

of familiar language. It is his Volumnia who exclaims, " here he lets me prate like one i' the stocks," and who compares herself, as she once was, to a hen that clucks her chicken home. But then the conclusion, too, is pure Shakespeare ; and if it has not majesty it has something dramatically even more potent. Volumnia, abandoning or feigning to abandon hope, turns to her companions with the words :

> Come, let us go :
> This fellow had a Volscian to his mother ;
> His wife is in Corioli, and his child
> Like him by chance. Yet give us our dispatch :
> I am hush'd until our city be a-fire,
> And then I'll speak a little.[1]

Her son's resolution has long been tottering, but now it falls at once. Throughout, it is not the substance of her appeals that moves him, but the bare fact that she appeals. And the culmination is that she ceases to appeal, and defies him. This has been observed by more than one critic. I do not know if it has been noticed [2] that on a lower level exactly the same thing happens when she tries to persuade him to go and deceive the people. The moment she stops, and says, in effect, " Well, then, follow your own will," his will gives way. Deliberately to set it against hers is beyond his power.

Ruskin, whose terms of praise and blame were never over-cautious, wrote of Virgilia as " perhaps

[1] What she will utter, I imagine, is a mother's dying curse.

[2] Yes, it is noticed by Prof. MacCallum (p. 554).

the loveliest of Shakespeare's female characters." Others have described her as a shrinking submissive being, afraid of the very name of a wound, and much given to tears. This description is true ; and, I may remark in passing, it is pleasant to remember that the hero's letter to his mother contained a full account of his wounds, while his letter to his wife did not mention them at all. But the description of these critics can hardly be the whole truth about a woman who inflexibly rejects the repeated invitations of her formidable mother-in-law and her charming friend to leave her house ; who later does what she can to rival Volumnia in rating the tribunes ; and who at last quietly seconds Volumnia's assurance that Coriolanus shall only enter Rome over her body. Still these added traits do not account for the indefinable impression which Ruskin received (if he did not rightly interpret it), and which thousands of readers share. It comes in part from that kind of muteness in which Virgilia resembles Cordelia, and which is made to suggest a world of feeling in reserve. And in part it comes from the words of her husband. His greeting when he returns from the war, and she stands speechless before him :

> My gracious silence, hail !
> Wouldst thou have laugh'd had I come coffin'd home,
> That weep'st to see me triumph ? Ah, my dear,
> Such eyes the widows in Corioli wear,
> And mothers that lack sons :

his exclamation when he sees her approaching at their last meeting and speaks first of her and not of Volumnia :

> What is that curtsy worth, or those doves' eyes
> Which can make gods forsworn ? I melt, and am not
> Of stronger earth than others ;

these words envelope Virgilia in a radiance which is reflected back upon himself. And this is true also of his praise of Valeria in the lines perhaps most often quoted from this drama :

> The noble sister of Publicola,
> The moon of Rome, chaste as the icicle
> That's curdied by the frost from purest snow,
> And hangs on Dian's temple : dear Valeria !

I said that at one point the hero's nature *was* in a high degree imaginative ; and it is here. In his huge violent heart there was a store, not only of tender affection, but of delicate and chivalrous poetry. And though Virgilia and Valeria evoke its expression we cannot limit its range. It extends to the widows and mothers in Corioli ; and we feel that, however he might loathe and execrate the people, he was no more capable of injury or insult to a daughter of the people than Othello, or Chaucer's Knight, or Don Quixote himself.

POSTSCRIPT

Professor Case, in the Introduction to his admirable Arden edition of *Coriolanus*, while approving the in-

terpretation suggested in this paragraph of the change in the hero's mind, withholds his assent to the stress laid in the paragraph on the particular idea of the *burning* of Rome. Instead of arguing the question I will simply describe the way in which the emphasis on that particular idea came to impress me.

When I was studying the play afresh with a view to this lecture I noticed that, as the action approached its climax, the image of fire, not present to me before, became increasingly present, persistent and vivid; and at last, when Cominius, reporting his futile embassy to the hero, exclaims,

> I tell you he does sit in gold, his eye
> Red as 'twould burn Rome,

I said to myself, " Yes, *that* image of vengeance is what came to him in the solitude of his exile and has now become a possession. And, if I could have doubted this, doubt would have vanished when I reached Volumnia's speech (v. iii. 131), and read the words, its *final* words,

> Yet give us our dispatch :
> I am hushed until our city be a-fire,
> And then I'll speak a little.

The " possession " is shattered, and the catastrophe sure—and welcome.

Dismissing imagination, I have now made a research, and some readers may be interested in the result (the references are to the Globe Shakespeare).

Throughout the greater part of the play, though there is plenty of fighting and Corioles is taken, we hear, I think, nothing of any burning of towns or cities. There is a mention of fire at II. i. 273-5, but it is the fire of contention between the hero and the people; and the "burning" and "fires" of III. ii. 24 and III. iii. 68 are those of hell; and even at IV. iii. 19-26, where the image of fire is decidedly more vivid, this fire is that of the anger of the two parties in Rome. But in IV. vi. 78, 82, 85, 115, 137, we have crowded and vivid references to the burning of the Roman territory by the army of Coriolanus, and to the prospect of his burning the city. And then, after a short scene, comes, at V. i. 14, 17, 27, 32 (where Cominius makes the report of his interview and repeats the words of Coriolanus) fire-image after fire-image, the series culminating at 63 in that of the "eye red as 'twould burn Rome." In the next scene (7, 48, 76) the series, naturally, continues; but in V. iii. where Volumnia is to appear, it ceases (for the hero is inwardly beginning to yield), until it re-appears in her final words. And, after that, we have only the reference (V. v. 3) to the "triumphant fires" in the saved city.

ENGLISH POETRY AND GERMAN PHILOSOPHY IN THE AGE OF WORDSWORTH [1]

PROFESSOR ADAMSON devoted to philosophy the main work of his life. His teaching, in Manchester, in Aberdeen, in Glasgow, is remembered by hundreds of grateful pupils; and his writings, like the lectures which have been reproduced with conspicuous fidelity and skill since his death, are valued by all students of philosophy,—so highly valued as constantly to renew their regret that he did not live to pursue still further, and to record with his own hand, the ideas to which he had been led by many years of questioning and meditation. But by his friends the philosopher was admired also for a knowledge, judgment, and enjoyment of literature which professed students of that subject might envy, and by which some of them often profited; for no man could be more generous and helpful than Adamson, and he delighted in communicating knowledge as much as in acquiring it. When I was honoured with an invitation to give this lecture, I remembered these things; and it

[1] The Adamson Lecture, Manchester, 1909.

seemed to me appropriate that my subject should have something to do with philosophy, though it must belong mainly to the field of literature, and, where it extends into the other sphere, must be treated in a manner as little technical as possible, or, perhaps I should say, with the superficiality proper to a man of letters.

The present year is one of centenaries; and its immediate successors will resemble it. Darwin, Tennyson, Gladstone, and Lincoln, to name only the greatest, were quickly followed by Dickens, Thackeray, and Browning, by Bismarck, Schumann, and Wagner. Something like this conglomeration of new stars, this sudden pouring of a flood of genius on the earth, has been witnessed at other times. It is impossible to exaggerate its importance. Of its causes we know absolutely nothing, but it itself is the primary cause of the greatness of great periods, and without it nothing wonderful would come of "environment" or the spirit of the time. Another example of it, certainly not less remarkable, occurred in the later eighteenth century. In 1769 were born Napoleon and Wellington; next year Hegel and Wordsworth, and a greater still, Beethoven; then Scott, then Coleridge; and in 1775 and 1776 the philosophers Schelling and Herbart. After that there was a pause in the production, not indeed of remarkable men, but of men so pre-eminently endowed; but in 1788 there appeared together, by a curiously happy

conjunction, Byron and Schopenhauer; and a few years later Shelley, and then Keats. By reason, in the first instance, of one of these births Europe was convulsed with war for nearly two decades. By reason of others, though not of course for that reason alone, Europe saw a magnificent outburst of imaginative literature in England and of philosophy in Germany. Account for the poets and philosophers we cannot in the least; but we can observe a certain community of spirit among them, certain differences between one and another, certain influences which operated on them in various ways. That is an immense subject, and I confine myself to some remarks on the coincidence of this poetry and philosophy, on that community of spirit in them, and on some particular affinities between Wordsworth and Hegel, who happened, as we say, to be born in the same year. By the phrase "The Age of Wordsworth," it should be added, is meant the last few years of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth.

I

Our first topic may be introduced by an imaginary question put to me: "Since you speak of English poetry and not of German (though the Germans had a great poetry as well as we), why speak of German philosophy and not of English?" First, I reply, because the English philosophy of the time seems to

me to have much less community than the German with our poetry ; and next because a comparison of our poetry with our philosophy would be a comparison of something of the first rank with something of the second rank at best. For it is a striking peculiarity of our literature in the Age of Wordsworth (as may be seen by reference to Professor Herford's admirable little book on that period), that, while it was exceptionally strong on the imaginative side, it was by no means so in other directions. It was the time of the poets Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats ; of the novelists Scott and Jane Austen ; of the poetic critics Coleridge and Lamb. Here, in imaginative literature, are eight writers who by almost universal consent are ranked, in point at least of genius, only below—and not in every case below—the greatest in their field of work. But when we turn to other kinds of literature we find nothing like this. We find valuable writing on philosophy, theology, history, politics ; but (except perhaps in the very special field of political economy) not a single writer who occupies in his department the rank that these eight hold in theirs, or such a rank as would be assigned without doubt to some writers of the eighteenth century,—to Hume in philosophy, to Gibbon in history, and to Burke in political disquisition. Whatever the substantial value of Hume's philosophy may be, no one will question his *genius* for the subject or his claim to a

considerable place in its history. But it would be something more than rash to say this of Godwin or Dugald Stewart or Bentham. If any Englishman of that time had a gift for philosophy amounting to genius, it was Coleridge. But, even if his gift was really so great, he was unable to use it in such a way as to influence the development of the science, and if we wish to know what he tried in vain to accomplish we must go to his contemporaries in Germany. For there we find just what we miss at home, an effluence of philosophical genius as unmistakable and almost as profuse as the effluence of imagination here. There is plenty of room for dispute about the truth of the theories of Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, but not for dispute about their genius. *Their* names may be coupled without any sense of incongruity with those of our eight imaginative writers, and in many of their thoughts we feel the presence of the same spirit that spoke in English poetry. The statement that Wordsworth and Hegel, or Byron and Schopenhauer, express one substance in different forms would be a misleading exaggeration, but not a paradox. But who could dream of saying such a thing of Wordsworth and Byron on the one side and of our native philosophers on the other ?

This very marked discrepancy between the two kinds of literature is a peculiarity of the Age of Wordsworth. We do not find it in the same degree

at any other period after the Revival of Letters. We do not find it at all in the times of Locke and Berkeley and Hume. And yet, as I will try to show, it illustrates in an extreme form a characteristic of the English or Anglo-Saxon mind.

Suppose there were a congress of all the peoples that are and have been. And suppose the judges had to determine the special gift or gifts—the genius, so to say—of each people, and so its particular contributions to humanity. What would they say to us English? They would not compare us with the Greeks in sculpture, or the Germans in music, or (though we have had great painters) with the Italians in painting. But might they not say to us something like this? "You have shown an unsurpassed, perhaps an unequalled, genius for politics and government, and not less for business. These belong to the field of practice. Passing beyond it, you have done great things in the sciences of nature, and—strange in a nation of shopkeepers!—such great things in imaginative literature, and especially in poetry, that it is possible here to compare the English, alone of modern peoples, with the Greeks. Your constitution and empire, your manufactures and commerce, your Newton, your Shakespeare—no one will deny you first prizes for these exhibits."

Now let me continue, to save the judges a disagreeable duty and to bring out the point I have in view. I will put it broadly and without the quali-

fications which, no doubt, should be supplied. Our poetry, which for the present purpose may be taken to include our imaginative literature in general, is one of our national glories. And it is in poetry that the English mind expresses most fully its deepest insight and feelings. This cannot be done by natural science, simply because that confines itself to a single aspect of the world. It may be done by religion, by philosophy, by poetry and the other arts, because they are not thus confined. The English mind does it best in poetry, and not in the shape of religious or philosophical ideas. We have been, and are, much in earnest about religion ; but we have produced very few, if any, men of the first order of genius in that sphere—men like St. Francis, Thomas à Kempis, Luther, or Pascal, mystics like Jacob Böhme, theologians like Schleiermacher. In philosophy we have some great names, but none of the greatest, none to rank with Plato or Aristotle, Spinoza or Kant. And then there is this further fact. When the English mind is in flood and approaching or reaching its high-tide, or (to vary the metaphor) when its spiritual temperature is highest, it breaks into poetry ; and its greatest poetry appears at such times. But its most famous philosophy does not. Locke and Berkeley and Hume appear when the tide is on the ebb, or the temperature a trifle subnormal, and when the poetry shows less of creative power and lyrical passion and comes somewhat nearer to prose. Is

not that symptomatic? And this is not all. The matter, the ideas, of these philosophers do not strike us as corresponding with those pictures of the world that are painted by our most imaginative poets. More than a certain degree of such correspondence we cannot, of course, expect. Philosophy never speaks the same language as poetry, or presents exactly the same view of things. If it did, why should it exist? But still, if we read first Pindar and the Greek dramatists, and then Plato and Aristotle, we feel no incongruity or want of kinship in the poetry and the philosophy, and no inadequacy of either to the other. Neither do we feel this after reading German poetry from Goethe to Heine, and German philosophy from Kant to Hegel (a statement which does not imply that any of the philosophers was so wonderful a man as Goethe). But this is just what we do feel when we pass from the poetry of Shakespeare's or Wordsworth's Age to Locke or Hume or any of our most purely native philosophers. We find ourselves in the presence, not merely of an inferior degree of genius, but of a view of the world incongruous with the substance of the poetry.

Well, these facts may be interpreted in opposite ways. They arise, you may tell me, from that massive common-sense in which we are so superior to the volatile Greeks and the dreamy Germans. We have, indeed, an odd liking for poetry; but we know that it is really made of moonshine, and that a true

philosophy must show it to be so, and must be merely empirical or sceptical. And I shall reply, of course, that your contention is itself an illustration of my thesis that the English mind, on the whole, sees deepest when it sees poetically, and that it welcomes and is inspired by that which its poets tell it, but shakes its head and turns away when philosophers, Greek or German or educated by Greeks and Germans, offer to its understanding what its imagination had accepted. But whichever interpretation of the fact is correct—whether our poetry is inadequate to our philosophy, or our philosophy to our poetry—their incongruity surely is a fact ; and it is illustrated in a striking degree in Wordsworth's time, when our poetry shows but little kinship with our own philosophy, and a good deal with that of Germany.

II

I come to my second subject. Every one who reads the literature of the two countries at that time (I am using the word " literature " as inclusive of philosophy) feels the presence of one atmosphere and spirit in all that he reads. Yet when he examines and reflects, he finds a number of divergent and even violently conflicting tendencies. Let me give two examples of this divergence. There is the strain of the *Aufklärung*, as the Germans call it—the " enlightenment "—the rationalistic strain, which comes down from Locke and the English Deists, and

from Voltaire and the Encyclopædists, with its rejection of supernaturalism and of all external authority, and its belief in reason and in the goodness and progress of man. It is exemplified in our poetry by Shelley, though there is much in Shelley that transcends it. But over against this we find an implicit or open rejection of the claims of this reason, an insistence on feeling, on the affections, on imagination, or some higher kind of reason; again, an unusual sympathy with Nature, amounting sometimes to worship, and coupled with hostility to that mechanical interpretation of Nature which is held to be rational; and, further, a similar appreciation of human nature where it is *not* particularly rational or progressive—for instance, in children, peasants, or simple women who "do not understand, but love." There is much of this, we know, in Wordsworth and Coleridge and even in Byron. So there is also in the successors of Kant. They are, no doubt, believers in what *they* call reason, and in no merely external authority; but they oppose the *Aufklärung* and pour scorn on the pretensions of *its* reason.

This is one main contrast which runs through the literature. Here is another. That enthusiastic faith in man's progress towards perfect goodness and happiness belongs mainly to the strain of the *Aufklärung*, and we are familiar with it in Shelley; but where the contrary strain prevails, as in Wordsworth, Coleridge, and some of the philosophers, we still find a very

decided optimism,—a conviction, to quote Wordsworth, that

> the inner frame is good
> And graciously composed.

On the other hand, Shelley's poetry, with all its enthusiasm, is profoundly melancholy; opposite Wordsworth stands Byron, weeping and laughing by turns over the tragedy or farce of life; and the optimist Hegel is confronted by Schopenhauer, the first exponent in the history of philosophy of a developed system of pessimism.

These contrasts may surprise and perplex us. But why should they? Only because we have so strong an impression of kinship and unity in the more remarkable products of the age, and because this impression persists, however clearly we may realize the contrasts. To what then is it due? I can refer, in answer, only to one or two essential points.

In almost all these products, poetic or philosophic, we feel an extraordinary intensity. The time is preeminently, to recur to our metaphors, one of a flood-tide or a high temperature. Each of the poets and philosophers seems to have caught sight of something that startles and engrosses him. He is staring at it with all his eyes and all his soul, and it fills him with thoughts and emotions which force him to utterance and creation. It makes no difference what particular aspect of things has thus arrested him; whether the emotions it excites are mainly joyful or painful;

whether his mental life is tumultuous, as with Byron or Shelley or Schelling, or an inward and steady fire, as with Wordsworth and Hegel. Still there is the same intent gaze, the same incessant and rapid creation, and the same stamp of inspiration on the product. Poetry ran in a torrent in those years, and in the history of philosophy there is nothing comparable to the speed with which Fichte, then Schelling, then Hegel, took the lead on the way opened by Kant. In view of this characteristic of the time, we must find it significant that so large a part of the most notable literature was the work of youth and early middle life. Keats died at twenty-five, Shelley at twenty-nine, Byron at thirty-six. The poetry by which Coleridge is remembered was almost all composed before he was thirty, and three-quarters of Wordsworth's best before he was forty. It had taken Kant five-and-fifty years to climb to the point of view of the *Critique of Pure Reason*; but Fichte and Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer, reached the main ideas which won them their places in history a little before or a little after their thirtieth year. If it were our business to estimate the value of these movements in poetry and philosophy, we should find that their greatness and their defects are both connected with this character of intensity and inspiration.

What then does it betoken? An unusually strong sense, I would answer, of the power and the possibilities of man or of the "mind." This may seem a

strange statement when we remember how conflicting are the tendencies of the age, and especially that it is the time of Byron and Schopenhauer. But man is himself full of variety and contradiction; and therefore the greatness of man, and a sense or conviction of it, may well appear in forms that conflict. So here, the ideas of the *Aufklärung* as to the power of the individual reason and will, and as to the future of mankind, as we find them, for example, in Shelley, imply an exceedingly strong sense of greatness in man as Shelley sees him, or, if we prefer it, in a particular aspect of man. But the poets and philosophers who reject this point of view or greatly modify it, do not deny man's greatness; they assert it as *they* conceive it, and believe in *other* aspects of man, as strongly as Shelley himself. Again, the melancholy or the satiric spirit of some of the poetry, and the appearance of pessimistic philosophy, can not of course be directly due to a conviction of man's greatness; but none the less they witness to a peculiarly strong feeling of it. If I really feel myself a worm, I shall not be much saddened or exasperated when I miss the happiness of an angel: but I may be so if I feel myself only a little lower than the angels. All melancholy, despair, or rage, that has greatness in it, is an inverted idealism; and Byron and Schopenhauer only express negatively that sense of man's possibilities which is positively expressed by Shelley's prophetic rapture, Wordsworth's joy and faith, and

the towering claims advanced by the philosophers for the mind of man.[1]

It would be easy indeed to illustrate this matter by quotations from Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel ; but quotations containing terms which may be unfamiliar and cannot be quickly explained, are apt to mislead. These philosophers make statements about man, or "the Ego," or the mind, or spirit, which at first astound the reader. He applies them to himself and the thousands around him as they walk and talk in their whole empirical bulk, if the phrase may be excused ; and naturally the statements sound to him almost insane. Naturally, too, he is surprised and bewildered when, reading further, he finds these same philosophers saying of man, thus understood, things almost as painful or bitter as any to be found in *Ecclesiastes* or in Schopenhauer. But man, we know, is

> The glory, jest, and riddle of the world ;

and it is of man as the glory of the world, and the answer to its riddle, that those startling assertions are made. Even so, however, they remain startling. "By virtue of man's mind," writes Fichte, "the bodies of the universe hold together and make *one* body, and the suns wheel in the paths assigned them. Through *it* stands fast the enormous graduated array

[1] With regard to Schopenhauer it should be observed, also, that he won no fame in the age of which I am speaking. He came into his kingdom long after, when Hegel had been dethroned.

of beings from the midge to the seraph, and in *it* is the system of the whole world of spirits." [1] This dithyrambic style would not have suited Hegel in his later years; but to the end of his life he continued to maintain that it is not possible for man to think highly enough of the mind within him; that the hidden essence of the universe is powerless to resist the might of knowledge; that it is not humility but blasphemy to say that he cannot know God. And the favourite accusation of theologians against Hegel —an accusation ridiculous in one sense, but in another not wholly so—is that he identified God and man.

"But," it may be said, "this glorification of man must be peculiar to these strange philosophers. In our poetry—though in poetry such flights may be excused—there is nothing like it; and the proper answer to it is the pessimist's equally exaggerated depreciation of man." Well, let us see. Schopenhauer, for whom the existence of the world is a gigantic blunder, and man sunk in error, misery, and evil, still insists that there is salvation from them, and that it depends simply and solely on man. For that blind will, of which the world is the manifestation, becomes conscious in man. And there, pursuing at first—and indeed, in most men, to the last —what it calls happiness, it learns, in some men by

[1] *Ueber die Würde des Menschen* (*Werke*, i. 413). I have paraphrased in order to avoid technical terms.

hard experience, and in a few by hard thinking too, that happiness is an empty dream; and, turning against itself in the self-mortification of the Indian or Christian saint or the nineteenth-century philosopher, it can deny itself and will itself away, and so return to that Nirvana from which it made the monstrous mistake of issuing. It can do this if it will, but only in man. In other words, man can do this if he will; and on man, therefore, depends salvation from evil. This pessimistic philosophy thus exalts him almost as much as the optimistic. And as for English poetry, I will not quote from Shelley, since he may be expected to ascribe wonders to the mind of man, but from the poet whose religion was an offence to Shelley and who is known as the lover of humble lives and the preacher of humility. In the Preface to the *Excursion* Wordsworth printed some lines intended to introduce that philosophic poem, that song of Truth, of which the *Excursion* was to form a part. In these lines, after quoting Milton's prayer to the Heavenly Muse, he proceeds:

> Urania, I shall need
> Thy guidance, or a greater Muse, if such
> Descend to earth or dwell in highest heaven!
> For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink
> Deep—and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds
> To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.
> All strength—all terror, single or in bands,
> That ever was put forth in personal form—
> Jehovah—with his thunder, and the choir

Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones—
I pass them unalarmed. Not Chaos, not
The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,
Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out
By help of dreams—can breed such fear and awe
As fall upon us often when we look
Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man—
My haunt, and the main region of my song.

In prose (for it is only the ideas that concern us here) : the heavens with their occupants, pictured by Milton, are but a veil to that temple which is the Mind of Man ; and this Mind is a realm more awful than Milton's chaos or hell ; and, he goes on to say in lines which I have not quoted, it can also find in itself Milton's Garden of Eden and the Elysian Fields of the ancient poets. *All* is in it. Do you remember Fichte's words : " in it is the system of the whole world of spirits " ? Hegel, who knew most of the best poetry, seems unluckily never to have made acquaintance with Wordsworth's. He would have taken this passage to his heart.

III

That sense of the greatness of the mind which appears, directly or indirectly, in the most notable poetry and philosophy of the time, shows itself very strongly, we see, in these two writers. They resemble one another in further and more specific ways, some of which I proceed to notice, referring to Hegel only for the sake of them and without any idea of offering

to expound his philosophy. From that point of view, indeed, many of the statements I shall have to make would be open to criticism.

The mind [1] in man instinctively expects to find its counterpart in the rest of the world. This expectation leads to many very inadequate ideas,—the ideas we class as anthropomorphic; but at bottom, in Hegel's view, it is justified. For the inmost principle in man's mind is also the inmost principle in everything else. Whatever exists is a partial manifestation of it; and it itself is mind, identical in essence with what we call our minds, though free from their limitations. It appears in two main forms, nature on the one side, " our " minds, or finite mind, on the other; everywhere in both, from the elements of matter to the highest spiritual experience and creation; indivisibly in both, for mind is not composed of parts; more fully in the latter than in the former, but completely in neither.[2] Hence man's intelligence finds in nature, which may seem at first alien to it, its counterpart,—*e.g.* mathematical relations, law, systematic order. For the same reason the poetic soul divines in nature a soul something like its own, petrified in the mountains, dreaming in the

[1] This word, and still more the adjective " mental," suggest to many readers something merely intellectual. I might guard against this misleading suggestion by using the words " spirit " and " spiritual," and I have sometimes done so. But these terms also may mislead.

[2] Or, if completely in the latter, only so where the latter ceases to be finite.

trees, waking to feeling in bird and beast, living and moving everywhere; and religion sees throughout the world, natural and human alike, the presence or operation of a divine being or beings. Philosophy has to correct, supplement, harmonize, these ideas of the scientific, or poetic, or religious mind, and to get into a shape that will satisfy reason the truths that they express or symbolize. What that shape was for Hegel is a question beyond us here. We must pause on the very general notion we have sketched.

Now let us turn to Wordsworth; and you must excuse me for spoiling his poetry in order to show the skeleton of ideas in it. No passage in his writings is more famous than that, in the *Lines written near Tintern Abbey*, where he speaks

> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky,

—in short, whose dwelling is in Nature: then he adds,

> and in the mind of man;

and he goes on:

> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.

This one spirit, he says, impels "all thinking things," *i.e.* finite minds; and "all objects of all thought," *e.g.* Nature; and rolls through, or is the unity of, both forms of existence, minds and their objects.

The same ideas recur, with slight differences of expression, in the discourse of the Wanderer in the *Excursion* (opening of Book IX.). There is a soul or *active* principle, he says, in everything: in stars, clouds, trees, rocks,—in short, in Nature; and, he adds, in "the human mind"; which, he observes, is "its most apparent home," since there it appears without disguise, as soul. It is, however, the same soul in Nature and in Man; for, though it is distinct in every form of being, and a tree or rock is not a human mind, nor is each of them the other, yet none the less the spirit or active principle is one, continuous, and undivided in all:

> from link to link
> It circulates, the soul of all the worlds.

Further (I am now going beyond these two passages and condensing what may be gathered from many places), when the mind is poetic, as it is in thousands who are not poets, it *recognizes* in Nature that one soul which is also in itself. It finds there life, feeling, joy, love. And in certain experiences also it receives from Nature, and from its own depths, intimations that this one soul, enclosing both Nature and itself, transcends both, is completely revealed in neither, is untouched by the change and decay and other defects of its partial and transitory manifestations, and beckons the mind away beyond Nature and its own finite or temporal existence.

The likeness of these ideas to Hegel's general position, as we faintly sketched it, is obvious.[1] If we went further we should find it accompanied by decided differences, on which I can only touch. For one thing, Hegel, though a great critic of poetry dealing with man, nowhere shows an unusual sensitiveness to natural beauty, and one may doubt whether he would fully have appreciated, as Schelling would, Wordsworth's poetry of Nature. Besides, he would have objected to any tendency to regard Nature as a revelation of the divine mind on a level with its revelation in man; and he might have attributed this tendency to Wordsworth, whether rightly or not we cannot stay to inquire. Again, Wordsworth's doctrine, if we may use the word, is that imagination is the way to truth. By imagination he does not mean mere fancy, but a transference of the mind into the centre of the thing contemplated, and a construing of all its motions or actions from that centre outwards. Hegel would have insisted that no interpretation that is drenched with the

[1] I do not mean that Wordsworth's ideas remind one of Hegel as distinguished from Schelling or even from Spinoza; and I may add the suggestion that the lines quoted from the *Tintern Abbey* poem probably owe something to Coleridge's conversations with Wordsworth about Spinoza in 1797. Coleridge knew nothing of Schelling then, and nothing of Hegel till much later. I imagine he helped to interpret Wordsworth's poetic experience to him in 1797, as afterwards he supplied him with some Kantian ideas. The later interruption, amounting for some years to a cessation, of their intercourse was a very great misfortune for Wordsworth, and may well have been partly responsible for his failure to advance.

colours of imagination can be the *final* form of truth, though he would have agreed with Wordsworth that such an interpretation may contain much more truth than a mechanical view which denies any "active principle" and would convert Nature into "a universe of death."

This brings me to a second point of likeness. Wordsworth's belief in imagination opened his eyes to the significance of mythological religions. The rationalistic movement of the time, agreeing with orthodox Christianity that these religions were untrue, tended to regard them contemptuously as mere superstitious fancies, so far as they were not deliberate inventions of priestcraft. This point of view could no more satisfy Wordsworth than the mechanical theory of Nature. What imagination produces cannot, he doubtless felt, be simply false. In the Fourth Book of the *Excursion* he describes with much sympathy and beauty, and in a manner unlike that of previous poets, the mythological ideas of the ancient Persians and Chaldees and Greeks. Instead of being mere fancies they were to him proofs that man is never without some witness of the divine spirit in the world--imperfect witnesses, cloudy symbols, but still symbols of a truth that their prosaic critics never saw at all. Well, Schelling was early fascinated by mythology. In his later years, when the philosophy which had made him famous no longer satisfied him, he wrote chiefly of mythologies

and mysteries, in which he thought that he detected a profound theosophy. Hegel, who with all his imagination was a logician through and through, had no tendency that way; but he was the first great philosopher who systematically expounded the religions of the world as a series of partial revelations, of which Christianity was the consummation and not the mere denial. He would have been delighted with the Fourth Book of the *Excursion*, which is indeed curiously like him throughout. Naturally, he had no more idea of worshipping the Gods of Greece than Wordsworth had, but, we may be sure, he thought there was more truth in them than in the abstract Supreme Being of deistic enlightenment.

If we look now in another direction—the political—we still find this community. In the great year 1789 Wordsworth and Hegel were youths of nineteen. They sympathized enthusiastically with the French Revolution in its earlier stages. The first great sorrow of Wordsworth's life was caused by the war between his country and the French Republic. Nor did they ever regret their enthusiasm, or speak unworthily of the hopes that were shaken by the Reign of Terror and destroyed by the rise of Napoleon. The lines beginning,

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very heaven,

are too famous for quotation; but we are at once reminded of them when we read in Hegel's *Philosophy*

of History: "This was a glorious sunrise. All thinking beings combined to celebrate it. A sublime emotion ruled in that time; an enthusiasm of the spirit thrilled through the world, as if its reconciliation with God was now first accomplished." But the poet and the philosopher who welcomed the Revolution were alike averse to revolutionary *theory*, at least in its tendency to ascribe absolute rights to the individual man in isolation from his organic relationships to others. Wordsworth, in the time of his disappointed hopes, had tried to buoy himself up on the doctrines of Godwin, which show this tendency in an extreme form, attacking all kinds of permanent association, and asserting the whole sovereignty of individual reason at any and every moment. At this time the springs of poetry ran almost dry in him. When they flowed again he turned from such doctrines with abhorrence. In the *Borderers*—a tragedy highly interesting if only for that reason, but little read—he portrayed their practical outcome, as he conceived it and indeed had witnessed it in France. He became the champion of all that Godwin had denounced. In a hundred peaceful poems he celebrated the beauty and sanctity of local attachments and of the bonds and affections of the family. During the war with Napoleon he passionately insisted, in his great series of sonnets, that the nation is the one guarantee of outward freedom, and the one home of that inward freedom of soul which alone

makes outward freedom durable and valuable. And, carried beyond bounds by the news of the final victory of national independence at Waterloo, he horrified Shelley by declaring that Carnage is God's daughter.[1]

In these matters the philosopher may almost be said to theorize the feelings and intuitions of the poet. His earliest writings show a marked predilection for the social and political morality of the Greeks ; and with this morality he contrasts unfavourably that of Christendom, especially before the Reformation, on the ground that it is not social and political enough, but makes the individual soul the centre. His mature theory attempts to reconcile these two points of view ; but he remained inflexibly opposed to individualistic views, and, if you look in his system for what we usually call moral philosophy, you find in its place a philosophy of the family, society, and the State. If a man, he seems to tell us, can do his whole duty by these, his conscience should be at peace ; and if it troubles him further (except indeed to drive him into religion) it is probably a disguised form of self-conceit or hypocrisy. Hegel, again, like Wordsworth, refused to admit that war is simply irrational and barbarous, and his language on the

[1] The passage was altered later. It seems probable that Wordsworth's feeling about domestic and national relationships is connected with his devotion to Nature. The family is founded primarily on kinship of blood. A nation means, primarily, the inhabitants of a certain tract of Nature. The mere individual of revolutionary theory with his abstract reason would sever himself from these natural attachments.

subject, though far from hyperbolical, has given much offence. Finally, though they both believed in progress, they turned with impatience from ideals which inhabit only some distant future, fail to prove their power here and now in the world, and tempt to misprisal of realized or realizable good. This attitude was not due merely to that " loss of courage " to which Wordsworth confessed, and which disinclined them to welcome new social or political movements.[1] It came also from a conviction that there is a " soul of goodness " in things which are, and that, in spite of evils, the " inward frame of things " is wiser than its critics.

This conviction may be called optimistic ; and so we come to the last similarity between these writers that we can notice. The word " optimism " is sometimes popularly used to signify merely a sanguine view of anything, or again a theory which shuts its eyes to the evil in the world. But I mean by it here the belief that, in spite of admitted evils, and even by dint of them, the final meaning of things is good, and the consequent tendency to dwell on the good in them. That Wordsworth and Hegel were, in this

[1] This phrase, as applied to Wordsworth in his later years, is too weak ; but it would be most unjust to say of Hegel what might be said of Wordsworth. He had never held the ideas which first bewitched and then revolted the young poet, and there is nothing of extravagance or terror in his hostility to what may roughly be called " liberalism." I cannot go into this subject : but I may advise any one interested in it to compare Wordsworth's language about Catholic Emancipation and the Reform Bill with Hegel's essay on the latter.

sense, optimistic is clear enough; and they were almost bound to be so, since in the view of both the ultimate principle in everything is infinite and perfect mind. The only question, apart from particular traits in their optimism, is whether after all it did not rest, at least to some extent, on a failure to feel keenly enough, or to weigh heavily enough, the admitted facts called evil.

Now with Wordsworth there was, we may think, some degree of such failure in regard to one matter,—the conflict and pain in Nature. In our day great prominence—perhaps an exaggerated prominence—is given to this matter: it has been thrust into the foreground by the Darwinian theory. That was not so, of course, in Wordsworth's time. But we need no theory to tell us that spiders eat flies, and stoats kill rabbits; and yet Wordsworth almost entirely ignores such facts. A poet doubtless is at liberty to do so, and to confine himself to singing of the beauty and happiness of Nature. But then Wordsworth, unlike most poets, preached a *gospel* of Nature; and, as a preacher, he was bound to face the phenomena that seem to throw doubt on his gospel, and to make us feel that after all they are consistent with it. I do not say that he could not have done this; but he did not attempt it, and when he did not ignore the facts in question he showed an inclination to flinch from them.[1] He was here, it seems likely, still

[1] See, for example, *The Redbreast and the Butterfly*.

somewhat under the influence of Rousseau, which elsewhere he had shaken off. Just as Burns, in his address *To a Field-mouse*, regrets that

> Man's dominion
> Has broken Nature's social union ;

just as Cowper declares that

> God made the country, and man made the town ;

so Wordsworth yields here and there too much to a tendency to contrast the happiness, innocence, and harmony of Nature with the unrest, misery, and sin of man.

Some trace of a similar weakness may possibly appear again in his preference of country people to dwellers in towns. But I know no other sign of it in his view of human life. His recognition of the pain and evil there is full enough. He was himself, on the whole, a happy man ; and, besides, he believed in joy, and much of his poetry sings of the pleasure that is

> spread through the earth
> In stray gifts to be claimed by whoever shall find.

Yet how many of his most famous narratives deal with sad or painful subjects ; even (as in *Ruth*, or the *White Doe of Rylstone*, or the story of Margaret in the *Excursion*) with subjects that are terribly sad or painful ! The whole of the *Excursion* indeed may be said to be concerned with the question why the

Solitary, whose life has been shattered by misfortune, should not allow himself to yield to melancholy or sink into apathy. The reason why these poems themselves have an effect the very reverse of depressing is not that Wordsworth softens or veils the facts; he portrays them minutely and unsparingly. It is that he makes the reader feel the beauty or greatness of soul that may be shown in suffering and evoked by it. Man's life is dark, these poems seem to say, but in his "celestial spirit" there is a power —that freedom which is one with the "active principle" or "freedom of the universe"—that can win glory out of agony and even out of sin, as the full moon, rising behind a grove of trees, burns like a fire in their obscuring foliage, and

> turns the dusky veil
> Into a substance glorious as her own.

We encounter here again that sense of the mind's greatness which we found to characterize Wordsworth's Age. And for Wordsworth this greatness is shown not only in that transmuting energy, but in the refusal of the mind to rest in any attainment it may reach, in its pursuit of "something evermore about to be," and in strange intimations that it belongs to a vaster world than that of its earthly experience. But the transforming energy implies obstacles, and the overcoming of limits implies limits. And obstacles and limits are evils. So that

in this sense we may say that Wordsworth's optimism rests, not on the ignoring of evil, but on the fact of evil itself.

These last sentences may fairly be accused of giving to the poet's thoughts a more philosophical shape than he himself gave to them or perhaps would have accepted for them. The difficulty with Hegel is of the opposite kind,—how to go beyond statements so general as to be useless, without making statements which he would have repudiated as mere "popular chatter." His optimism is on the one hand even more thorough-going than Wordsworth's; and on the other it recognizes even more fully the fact of evil. He neither appeals, like the poet, to a future life, nor shares his indisposition to face the struggle and pain in Nature. Everything finite, for him, whether it be natural or human, is more or less deeply touched with imperfection and with conflict; when it feels, with pain; when it is also rational, with sorrow and moral evil. This is so, must be so, and in a sense ought to be so. Undisciplined feelings and hasty thoughts may cry out against it, but reason finds it rational. Hegel's emphasis on this aspect of the world is strong enough to satisfy any one but a theoretical pessimist. It offends some readers by its apparent ruthlessness, and others by its apparent immorality. But it is interwoven inseparably with his view of morality; and this is the point where his likeness to Wordsworth is most obvious. He fre-

quently attacks the doctrine, a favourite with many writers of the *Aufklärung*, that man is born good or is good by nature. That, he replies in effect, neither is, nor possibly could be, true. Man is not, indeed, by nature evil in the full sense of that word; but he is not by nature what he should be, and in that sense he *is* evil. He has to become good; and he can become good only by making himself so. For goodness is free activity, acts of will issuing in outward deeds; and though you can give a man a thing, to talk of an act begin given to him, by Nature or anything else, is to talk pure nonsense. Nor can he make himself good except by organizing his nature, which means developing it through limitation and denial, and by facing obstacles and transforming them into instruments of progress, and by the suppression of the moral evil that arises in him. It is there to be suppressed, and for no other reason; and the natural impulses are there to be organized; and the obstacles to be transformed. But, to be suppressed, organized, transformed, a thing must exist. As Goethe said,

> He only merits life and freedom
> Who daily conquers them anew.

Life and freedom, Hegel would add, are not merely *merited* by conquest, they *are* conquest; and conquest implies a foe. Without evils, then, no moral goodness.

This idea expresses theoretically, we may say, the spirit of some of Wordsworth's greatest poetry. And Hegel pushes it much further. Obstacles and other evils are forms of negation ; goodness, which is freedom realizing itself, is the negation of them. But negation, and the negation of it, are not the essence of morality alone ; they are the secret of the whole world, " the very pulse of the machine." Negation or contradiction is not, of course, everywhere pain or moral evil, but everywhere in the world it exists. The conflict and the transitoriness of all natural beings (and man is partly natural) proceed from it, and without it there would be no world at all. The world—nature and finite mind—is what it is, the *partial* manifestation of God, because there is this negation in it ; and its whole life, viewed from this side, is a groaning and travailing to return to him or be " reconciled " with him. It does return, and returns completely in the spirit of man, but there only through the deepest of all conflicts and negations, man's total denial of his finite being, and his total self-surrender to God, in whom there is no negation that is not overcome. This surrender is also identification. Here the mind (there is but one) puts off its finitude ; its implicit infinity is realized, its temporal life exchanged for eternity, and its mere humanity for divinity. And as this is accomplished only through negation, we may say that negation, though in God it is all overcome, is necessary even

to God.[1] We have here assuredly a doctrine of the greatness of the mind, and no less certainly an optimistic doctrine, but not an optimism which arises from the ignoring of evil or of the weakness, sorrow, or sin of man.

I have but scratched the surface of my subject. I had intended at least to illustrate it further from the affinities between Schopenhauer and Byron.[2] But the limits of a lecture are already reached, and only a few words can be added. It will be recognized perhaps that, so far as Wordsworth and Hegel are concerned, that exalted sense of human possibilities which marks their time was less presumptuous than it appears at first ; since in their view the mind of man is no property of his, and indeed, we might say, his private share in it consists of its limitations, while its greatness is all derived. But, even so, it may be asked whether they did not over-estimate that greatness, and whether later generations, and our own, have not tended to moderate or even to reverse their judgments, and generally to regard with some dis-

[1] According to Hegel this truth, with the truth of the unity of God and man, is contained in Christianity, which says in one language what his philosophy says in another ; while Deism, with its merely positive Supreme Being, misses these truths.

[2] I have not carried out this intention in the present volume. There is, of course, plenty of " pessimism " in Byron's verse, but it does not express a pessimistic *creed*, as Wordsworth's does an optimistic creed ; intellectually, he was a sceptic. The poet of that time who can be called, in the full sense, a pessimist was Leopardi, whose creed might well be compared with Schopenhauer's.

favour the impassioned enthusiasm, ambition, and melancholy of their Age. On the whole, I presume, that is so ; nor, in trying to exhibit some of their ideas, have I implied any unqualified acceptance of them. And yet, if I may descend to personal opinions, I believe in that Age. Every time, no doubt, has the defects of its qualities ; but those periods in which, and those men in whom, the mind is strongly felt to be great, see more and see deeper, I believe, than others. Their time was such a period, and ours is not. And when the greatness of the mind is strongly felt, it *is* great and works wonders. Their time did so, and ours does not. How should it ? From causes totally unknown to us, it seems that after about 1840 for many years scarcely any men of the highest genius, if any, were born in this country or elsewhere on the earth.[1] Perhaps that is one reason why some of us now doubt the greatness of the mind, and others take middling minds for great. We have the past to judge by, but most of us judge by the present. If men like those of 1770 were born twenty years ago, or ten, or even last month, some of us will live to see their wonderful works ; and then, in our own language, we shall speak of the mind more as the men of 1770 spoke.

[1] Numbers, possibly, may have been born who have disappeared prematurely. So they may in 1770. I need hardly add that I do not suppose the lack of genius of the first rank to be the *only* cause of the deficiency in great works ; but I do not believe that unfavourable influences are more than a secondary cause.

SHELLEY AND ARNOLD'S CRITIQUE OF HIS POETRY [1]

ARNOLD unfortunately never wrote a full critique of Shelley's poetry, but in various essays he gave briefly his opinion of it, comparing it unfavourably with that of Wordsworth and, on the whole, with that of Byron. This opinion is summarized in the well-known description of Shelley as "a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the air his luminous wings in vain." Its main point is unmistakable; for, in accordance with Arnold's method, it is hammered home by repetition: "ineffectual," "in vain," and even "beating in the air," say the same thing thrice; and when, towards the end of his life, Arnold returned to his description he added a fourth blow by printing in italics the words "and ineffectual." Thus, according to him, Shelley, except in "snatches and fragments,"

[1] An enlargement of a part of a Leslie Stephen Lecture given at Newnham College in 1919. My plan in preparing the lecture was to ask myself in what ways my youthful adoration of Shelley and his poetry had been modified in the course of half a century; and this plan is responsible for anything in these pages which may be thought too personal. But I wished also to criticize Arnold's judgment of Shelley in the chapters on Byron and Shelley in *Essays in Criticisms, Second Series.*

only strives after something which others attain. And of the snatches and fragments in which Shelley did succeed all we know is that they are *not* the most famous of his lyrics ; for these we may find in the *Golden Treasury*, while Arnold tells us that there we may find " a gallery of Shelley's failures."

So much for the main thesis of the criticism. It is developed in several passages with Arnold's usual happiness to the following effect (I must condense, but I keep his own words). Poetry has two functions. The first is to express with magical felicity the physiognomy and movement of the outward world ; and the second is to express with inspired conviction the ideas and laws of man's moral and spiritual nature. To perform these tasks adequately, therefore, it must have, on the one hand, natural magic, and, on the other, moral and spiritual profundity.

As to the first of the two functions, you will remember how Arnold says of Wordsworth at his best that Nature herself seems to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrative power. Of Keats, again, we hear that his natural magic is perfect. But of Shelley he says that in general he fails to achieve natural magic ; and contrasting, by way of example, Keats's *Ode to Autumn* with the *Golden Treasury* extract from Shelley's *Lines written among the Euganean Hills*, he tells us that the former renders Nature, the latter

tries to render her. He does, however, make one admission. While denying natural magic to Shelley's descriptive language, he acknowledges it in his rhythm.

On Shelley's failure in respect of the second main function of poetry, the expression of the moral and spiritual nature of man, Arnold writes only in general terms. But I presume he is referring to it when he tells us that Shelley's poetry suffers from the inevitable want, in general, of a sound subject-matter, and the consequent inevitable fault of unsubstantiality; and we may gather a part at least of his meaning, and possibly the whole, if we couple with this the statement that Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which he feels the joy offered to us in nature and in the simple primary affections and duties. These last, then, will be one example of a sound subject-matter; and a poetry which treats them profoundly will be substantial. With these simple primary affections and duties we may certainly contrast the subject-matter of *Alastor* and *Epipschychidion* and *The Sensitive Plant*, and again the ideas or creed which may in a sense be called the subject-matter of the *Revolt of Islam* and *Prometheus Unbound*. And we may easily believe that for Arnold all of these poems had both an unsound subject-matter and the incurable fault of unsubstantiality.

I have now given the chief points of Arnold's

critique ; and I will deal first with the question of magical felicity in language, adopting this general phrase because, although Arnold at first speaks only " natural magic," he does not (and could not with any plausibility) confine the question to poetry dealing with Nature, but maintains, in regard to poetic language in general, that Shelley, unlike Keats, " strains after " this magical felicity in vain. Now, ignoring for the moment the charge of straining in vain, I will say at once that Arnold's taste in language seems to me so delicate and true that, if I dissented from his judgment here, I should assume that I was mistaken. But in fact I do not here, in the main, dissent. Shelley, I think, was certainly a master of language ; but still, after being absorbed in reading him, I do not say to myself, " What a master of language he is ! " as I do after reading Keats or Coleridge at their best. Keats does seem to me here the superior of Shelley, and indeed, with the possible exception of Coleridge, of all our poets since Milton. The *Ode to Autumn*, for instance, is not, to my mind, a greater poem than the *Ode to the West Wind*, but it is the more marvellous in felicity of language. And therefore, to this extent, I subscribe to Arnold's criticism. But, as for Shelley's " straining " after felicity, could any word be less appropriate ? Is there in any poetry expression more spontaneous in effect than that of Shelley's best poems, and especially of his lyrics ? And is not his

defect rather that a good deal of his poetry is too like improvisation? [1]

However, accepting to some extent Arnold's judgment as to magical felicity in general, we may accept it also in the particular case of poetry about Nature. But here too one meets, I think, in Arnold and elsewhere, with partial or otherwise mistaken criticism. Take, for instance, those famous words about Nature taking the pen out of Wordsworth's hand and writing for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrative power. They are the words of a master, and they would not apply to Shelley, who has not either this Wordsworthian "power" or the direct force of Byron. But then power is not the one and only characteristic of Nature's handwriting, and a critic might be expected to mention one or two of the others. And again: it is sometimes said (though not, I think, by Arnold) that Shelley is not the equal of Keats or Coleridge in calling up pictures in one's imagination, and making one *see* what he is describing. That appears to me true on the whole; but then consider what those words "picture" and "see" imply. They refer to *one* of the senses, and to things that are visible. And things visible or picturable are, not exclusively but still pre-eminently, things at rest.

[1] I think I recognize in *some* of Shelley's poems what Arnold describes as "straining"; but it is not a straining after the happiest word for something easily or distinctly apprehended: it is a straining to find any words at all for something beyond distinct apprehension.

And it is usually such objects at rest, whether things or persons or scenes, that Keats calls up before one so wonderfully: Autumn watching the cider-press; Saturn sitting in the vale, quiet as a stone; the sacrificial procession figured on the Grecian urn. But the world is not made only of picturable things or things at rest, nor is sight the one sense we possess. Suppose you take what is only or chiefly audible, and again what is in rapid motion; have these less poetic value? And, in regard to the rendering of these, is not Shelley far superior to Keats? Is he indeed the inferior of any poet? Is not this even his peculiar province, partly because his own spirit is, before all things, swift, and partly because whatever is itself invisible and unpicturable and touches us only through lightning-flashes, or momentary tones, or the agitated motion of things or thoughts or feelings, is for him itself a spirit, if not the spirit of the Universe? Take, what is perhaps his most popular lyric, the stanzas *To a Skylark*. They contain some pictures, though not of the skylark; and, if you ask whether these pictures have all the magic of Keats at his best, you must certainly answer No. But with equal certainty you must add that, even if Shelley were capable of this magic, it would here be out of place. For what moves Shelley, and through his poem moves you, is nothing picturable; it is the ecstasy of freedom and joy, pouring in sound from something lost to view in the heights of air and the omnipresent

glory of sunset light. Does he not render that, and render it with magical felicity ?

I wonder what Arnold, if he were here, would answer to this question. Whatever his answer might be, it would be given with charming urbanity, and I fancy it might run : " You forget my acknowledgment that in Shelley's *rhythm* there is natural magic : and the Skylark poem is a very happy example of this." And I should hardly have the heart to retort : " Then what a pity that you confined yourself to that bare acknowledgment, and did not enlarge a little on the beauty and variety of Shelley's rhythm ! And did you really mean—what your words certainly implied—that this rhythmical magic is present only in his poetry of Nature, and not also in his other poetry, or at all events in his other lyrical poetry—in ' Swifter far than summer's flight,' or the ' Ode to the West Wind,' or ' Rarely, rarely comest thou,' or the ' snatches and fragments ' (whatever they were) which did not figure in his ' gallery of failures ' ? I cannot imagine that you meant this."

Swinburne used to insist that the first business of a singer is to sing. Suppose, to avoid controversy, you confine this statement to lyrical poetry, can you hesitate where to place Shelley among English singers ? I cannot. His range here is immensely wider than that of Keats, a good deal wider than that of Wordsworth ; and the music of his song is

the very echo of his mood, whether that be longing, aspiration, triumph, gaiety, deep dejection, uncomplaining sadness, the peace or the rapture of momentary harmony. Naturally, the compass of his voice is not unlimited, and he is not equally master of all rhythms and metres. Where a full-toned slow-moving rhythm is wanted Keats surpasses him ; and Keats at his best does so also, as Milton and Wordsworth certainly do, in feeling for the movement of a sonnet. But to attempt *in general* to put Keats beside him as a lyrical poet appears to me an error almost grotesque ; and to put Milton or Wordsworth beside him still an error. And I would go yet further. In Shakespeare's day the subject-matter or province of lyrical poetry was much more restricted than in Shelley's day. If this had been otherwise, I suppose Shakespeare would have been our greatest lyrist : but, as things are, I cannot doubt that that title belongs to Shelley.[1]

I will venture, without reference to Arnold, to add some remarks on Shelley's style, not only in the lyrics but everywhere. I refer only to the excellence

[1] Arnold's description of the poems in the *Golden Treasury* as Shelley's " failures," whenever I think of it, fills me with astonishment. I could understand his using the word of *Life of Life*, one of the most inspired poems ever written, but still a faulty poem. But what it was that dissatisfied him, say, in *Rarely, rarely comest thou*, is to me a perfect mystery. *Life of Life* is no longer to be found, I regret to say, in the *Golden Treasury*. I may add that I wish Shelley's prose version in Italian could be published, as it might determine the meaning of some difficult lines.

of the style and not to its defects ; and I wish, not to compare it with other styles or to claim a general superiority for it, but only to indicate what in it is to me always attractive and sometimes endearing. I must choose the ugly word "spontaneousness," and the pleasant word "fluidity." The language is poetical through and through, not, as sometimes with Wordsworth, only half-poetical ; and yet it seems, as I said, to drop from Shelley's lips. It is not wrought and kneaded (a word which Arnold happily applies to the greater style of Milton) : it flows. It has few reminiscences of earlier writers, like the many delightful Elizabethan echoes in Keats ; it is the common literary language of Shelley's time spoken by an angel. In using that word I have in mind what Garrick said of Goldsmith,—that he wrote like an angel, though he talked like poor Poll. To do something "like an angel" means, I suppose, to do perfectly and with graceful ease what a mere man can do only in part and with evident labour ; and that, says Garrick, is how Goldsmith wrote. Well, except that Shelley sometimes wrote badly and Goldsmith perhaps never did, Shelley does, I think, among our poets resemble Goldsmith among our prose-writers,—Goldsmith, whose style is so spontaneous and fluid that you read without regarding it, and only when you put the book down become aware that your mind has been moving with perpetual ease and grace. This quality in Shelley's writing is

present almost equally in the narrative Spenserians of the *Revolt of Islam*, and the dramatic blank verse of *The Cenci*, and fully, thought not constantly, in his highest flights ; and it helps to make the best of his quieter lyrics comparable with the best Elizabethan songs.[1]

In these last remarks, you may have noticed, I have not confined myself to those of Shelley's poems which, according to Arnold's division, deal with "the outward world" ; and I ought now to consider separately his judgment of Shelley in respect to the second function of poetry, the expression of man's moral and spiritual nature. But this judgment is so general and bare that I do not know how to discuss it. All that I can be sure of is that, in his opinion (and I do not contest it), Shelley cannot be compared with Wordsworth in his dealings with the simple and primary affections and duties. These, however, do not exhaust human nature, and certainly were not believed to exhaust it by the poet who wrote the

[1] I cannot help adding a reference to something of Shelley's which is probably unknown to the majority of his readers. Was ever a poem more delightfully written than his translation of the Homeric *Hymn to Mercury* ? It resembles *The Witch of Atlas*, not only in metre, but in making one feel that, for once in a way, Shelley is light-hearted ; and, being a translation, it is free from those passages of description which (*e.g.* in *Alastor* and the *Triumph of Life*) can be understood only after a prolonged effort.

I may add that Shelley's style, considered simply as style, appears to me best where it is least heightened or excited,—better, for example, in *Rarely, rarely*, or *Music when soft voices die*, or *The Recollection*, than in *To Constantia Singing* or the *Ode to Liberty* ; better, on the whole, in the stanzas *To a Skylark* than in the greater *Ode to the West Wind*.

Immortality *Ode* and scores of famous lines in the *Prelude* and elsewhere. Only it is useless for me to appeal to the *Ode* or to those scores of lines. We know what Arnold thought of Wordsworth's " intimations," and can be sure that he would have shaken his head over the address to Duty :

Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
And the most ancient heavens through thee are fresh and strong.

Indeed, in controversy, he seems to have been ready to condemn as merely fanciful the imaginative expression of any idea that went beyond his own creed.

And this compels me to revert, before I pass on, to his distinction between " the outward world " and " man's moral and spiritual nature." I adopted it for the time as convenient ; but, for Arnold, it was much more than convenient, and his unqualified use of it denotes, in fact, a total rejection of something fundamental in the poetry both of Wordsworth and of Shelley. For these poets (it has become a platitude) there is a spirit in Nature, and Nature therefore is not a mere " outward world." And the spirit in Nature is one and the same with the spirit in man. And this is not, for them, a fancy which can be ignored in reading and discussing their poems. Wordsworth's cuckoo is a " blessed bird," but it is none the less

No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery ;

and so is Shelley's skylark, and so (let me add) is the nightingale of Keats. And, if you ignore this patent fact, you may indeed discuss with profit the felicity of the language of such poems, but you are ignoring what they were to their author, and dismissing what, for their author, was their soul.[1]

I will now attempt, without further reference to Arnold's critique, to say something on Shelley's ways of looking at human life, dealing first with those which, as it seems to me, diminish greatly the value of his most ambitious poems. And I say " his most ambitious poems," because his " gallery of failures " in the *Golden Treasury*, and the majority of the remaining lyrics, appear to me to be not seriously impaired by these defects.

By temperament, it is obvious, Shelley was strongly inclined to be extreme in his sympathies and antipathies. And his intellect (I do not mean his imagination) tended the same way. It tended to abstraction, to see a thing—a dead thing, a person, or a cause—not in its full concrete nature, but almost as if it had but a single quality, and so to exaggerate differences into oppositions. It was therefore, on the whole, unfortunate for him that he was born in a revolutionary age, seething with theoretical ideas ;

[1] And, I may add, you are ignoring the connexion of these poets with the movement of contemporary thought, abroad and even in England. On this see T. H. Green, *Works*, iii. pp. 118-20.

further, that he was born with an inclination to philosophise, but with no marked gift for philosophy ; and, finally, that while he was quite young and had little knowledge or experience, he met not only with the writings of Hume and Condorcet and other men of great mark, but also with those of that typically abstract thinker, Godwin, whose influence on him is brought out in an excellent essay by Leslie Stephen. It is impossible to imagine what Shelley would have been if he had lived in Shakespeare's time ; perhaps a greater Spenser, rather more sympathetic towards the Irish than Spenser was. As things were, he fell under the dominion of ideas which at once inspired and half-crippled him, and the force of which was enhanced by his early personal experience of conflict with the powers that be—paternal, academical, and legal. His most ambitious poems (if we except *The Cenci*) were written in the service of these ideas ; and, though the passion and glory that we feel in the *Revolt of Islam* and, still more, in *Prometheus Unbound*, are due in part to Shelley's faith in them, they, in combination with his temperament, are responsible for defects both in the poems themselves and, as it seems to me, in his habitual view of life. Let me illustrate what I mean.

Humanity, in this view of life, is divided into two completely opposite parts. One of them is enormously the larger ; and it consists, first, of the holders of power or authority, namely kings and priests, with

their satellites and tools; and, secondly, of their slaves and dupes, who constitute the mass of mankind. The other part is that tiny minority called "the free"; and these are also the good, for they devote themselves to the liberation of the mass from oppression and delusion, and, in consequence, are always persecuted and sometimes martyred.

This notion of the world, even as modified to some extent in the latest poems, still remains (to use Arnold's word) "unsubstantial." And it cannot be denied that it was held by Shelley himself, though less completely in his last two years, with the narrowness and self-complaisance of a religious or political sect, confident that there is no salvation outside its own fold.

Again: Shelley in 1815, writing (in Greek) in the Visitors' book at the Montanvert Inn, described himself as a philanthropist, a democrat, and an atheist. All these, of course, were, for him, terms of praise: the first is so for all of us; the second too is so for me; and, when I remember what at this time Shelley meant by the word "God," so is the third. Well, he was unquestionably a philanthropist and, in the sense intended, an atheist: but in what sense was he a democrat? He believed in a democratic form of government (not at all an extreme form of it), and his view of the world was, so far, democratic. But is that enough to make a democrat? If I were asked for examples of democrats, I should

think first of Mazzini and Walt Whitman, who not only believed in a democratic form of government, but believed in, liked, respected, even revered, the common man, or what Whitman called "the divine average." Shelley pitied this man, helped him whenever he could, stood up to defend him. But an aristocrat may do all this, and pity falls short of respect, not to speak of reverence. Wordsworth, even when he had renounced his early political opinions, was, in the sense I mean, more of a democrat than Shelley, and you cannot imagine him writing of "the polluting multitude." It is a significant fact that Shelley, who so greatly admired Wordsworth's early poems, still, I think, never mentions, or appears to have been influenced by, such poems as *Michael, The Brothers, The Leech-gatherer*. And, when he describes the men and women of the regeneration, I do not feel that any of them are regenerated peasants or artisans; they are all of them people like you and me—only regenerated.

Again: Shelley is often called an optimist. But a view of existing mankind as composed almost wholly of tyrants and slaves, deluders and deluded, is surely pessimistic enough, hardly less so than the views of professed pessimists, like Schopenhauer or Leopardi. And throughout his life, even to the end, this view, though modified, persists. The *Triumph of Life*, his last and unfinished work, is a deeper poem

than *Prometheus Unbound*, but the picture is dark enough. Miss Stawell, in her excellent paper on this poem,[1] truly observes that Life, the conqueror, cannot be the whole of what we call life. Perhaps we may say that the name answers roughly to what in the New Testament is called "the world." Over whom, then, does Life triumph? First, and most completely, over the enormous majority who pass their days in a vain show and are utterly forgotten; and, secondly, over a certain number, so exceptional as to be remembered, who resisted the influence of Life but were ultimately overborne and enslaved. There remain, unconquered, and therefore unseen in the dreadful procession, first, those units among millions, of whom Socrates and Christ are types, and who never succumbed to that influence; and, secondly, those who were saved by dying young. Do you call that an optimistic view?

"No," it may be answered, "but you are forgetting what does not, indeed, appear in that dark and solemn poem (possibly, because it was never finished), but what does appear in the earlier great poems as well as in many of the lyrics, and is of the essence of Shelley's faith. He believed in, and sang of, a human perfection to be attained, at however distant a date, upon the earth, and in a continuous progress towards it, due to those heroic, persecuted, or martyred

[1] In *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, vol. v.

beings, who resist evil power, and endure, and 'hope till hope creates From its own wreck the thing it contemplates.'" Yes, this is true; and even if one can neither believe in human perfection at any date upon the earth, nor feel much attraction in Shelley's picture of it, one may none the less have faith in the progress of mankind and feel the inspiration of Shelley's faith in that. Only (I speak for myself) this faith would not be inspiring to me unless I also believed that the value of any stage in this progress cannot lie *merely* in its contribution to the next, but must lie also in itself, and that there is always (to quote Wordsworth) "a *present* good in life's familiar face," not less emphatically good because there is a better still to come. This is what I miss in Shelley—this, and something else that I find in Wordsworth—the perception, or the faith, that evil is not here for nothing, that progress is made, not merely by resisting it, but no less by transmuting it, and even that the greatness of the mind is seen *most* in its power to win good out of evil.

Some of these weaknesses (to take a last point) are connected with the tendency, so strongly marked in Shelley, to shrink from differences and even to be horrified by them. It is the other side of his passion for perfection. He seems to have felt (I do not imply that he reasoned thus) that, if two things differ, each, as lacking something that the other has,

must be imperfect, whereas everything should be perfect.

> The One remains, the many change and pass ;
> Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly ;
> Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of Eternity.

If one colour could also be all the other colours, Eternity might be coloured; but, as this cannot be, Eternity is colourless. On the regenerated earth described in *Prometheus Unbound* there will be no tribes, nations, or classes, for such differences must mean, if not conflict, at any rate defect. The difference of sex must still remain (though marriage will not), for Shelley cannot do without the love of the sexes ; but his lovers (*e.g.* Laon and Cythna) are as like one another as he can make them, while the good people and the bad people in his most characteristic[1] poems seem to have almost nothing in common. This tendency is largely responsible for the feeling of many readers that Shelley's poetry is " thin " or, as Arnold says, " unsubstantial."

It remains now to glance, in what time remains, at the other side. And here I must first observe that, when we consider Shelley's poetry especially as it was influenced by certain theoretical ideas, and again especially in contrast with Wordsworth's, we inevitably do him an injustice, by making his mind

[1] This is not so in *The Cenci*.

and poetry appear much narrower than they really were. For one thing, we have to remember that they show a continuous progress, that he died at twenty-nine, and that, if Wordsworth had died at that age, we should never have read the Immortality *Ode*, or the *Ode to Duty*, or the greater part of the *Prelude* and the *Excursion*, or *Laodamia* and the *White Doe*. Again, Shelley not only developed in certain ways Wordsworth's view of Nature, but he had, as it seems to me, a more extensive mind. When critics say that he is monotonous, that is often because they confine their attention to the poems which are most affected by his doctrines. In reality his range of perception and sympathy was wide. To take one example, you cannot imagine Wordsworth even thinking of writing such poems as the stanzas on Leonardo's Medusa, or, again, the *Vision of the Sea*, that strange, rough, powerful fragment, in which exultation in the beauty of the terrible is mingled with the fascination of fear [1]; and Shelley's notes on some of the statues in Florence and Rome show convincingly how quick, as well as imaginative, was his feeling for beauty of all kinds. Nor are his dealings with human nature (confessedly not his strong point) nearly so circumscribed as some critics suppose. For example, his picture of Rousseau's mind (in *The Triumph of Life*) is, surely, far from failing in psy-

[1] This aspect of Shelley's poetry has now been fully shown in Professor A. T. Strong's excellent *Three Studies in Shelley*, 1921.

chological sublety. And if you reply, "That is because he feels Rousseau to be so like himself," take his most ambitious attempt at character-drawing, Count Cenci, whom certainly he did not resemble. It is customary to say that Count Cenci is only Shelley's usual tyrant, magnified into an absolute monster. But this is to be more obsessed by Shelley's ideas than Shelley himself was. In his Cenci there is surely as much insight into the dark places of the soul as in many of the villains of Elizabethan tragedy ; and, if Shelley had been Shakespeare's contemporary, we should be wondering at powers which now we wholly deny to him. In short, it was not, in the main, a limitation of gifts or powers that caused the defects of which I have spoken.[1]

I must return, next, to something already mentioned more than once, but, in effect, ignored by Arnold. When we think of, and try to state, Shelley's view of life and the world, we must not forget that, for him, there is behind them, and entering into them, that ultimate spiritual perfection which is also the ultimate *power*. This applies both to Nature and to human life ; and, as to the former, we find that Nature is, for him, the almost, if not wholly, unobstructed revelation of that power. Hence Shelley, alone with Nature, is almost always happy. If he is too sad to be consoled even by her,

[1] On *The Cenci* see the article *Les Cenci* in Swinburne's *Studies in Prose and Poetry*.

still *she* is at peace and happy. And if she is wild and turbulent, she is still no alien force, and much less a hateful force, but lovely and glorious in her terror. Beside that dusty highway, along which moves the dreadful car of Life, lie heavenly meadows where the victims of Life might wander if they would. Prometheus, the human hero, is sustained by the sympathy of companions who apparently typify aspects of Nature, and the whole of Nature rejoices in his liberation. If the Lady dies and the garden of the *Sensitive Plant* sinks into decay and appears a ravaged waste, all this (Shelley muses) is perhaps but our illusion ; for the garden and its lady are, in truth, for ever what they are in the one Reality which is perfect, and it is we that change and fade, not it or they. If, again, we turn to the human life which does change and fade and seems so dark, there is still, both behind it and in it, that ultimate Power, which may seem to stand aloof from the struggle with evil, but is, in truth, the guarantee of certain final conquest, and into whose perfect life there is at least a hope that death may lead us. And, even now, it is not only " in some world far from ours " that differences remain and yet unite, and " music and moonlight and feeling " are themselves and yet are " one." [1] It was so already for Shelley, as he stood alone on the slope of the Euganean Hills ; and in the pine-forest of the *Invitation* and the *Recollection*, where

[1] *The keen stars were twinkling.*

he was not alone, there was " scattered from above the sun [1] a light of paradise."

In these ways the abstract oppositions of his more explicit creed are softened and harmonized in his poetry, and in the implicit view that it contains. And there are many other things which have the same influence, though I can add but a few words on one or two of them. The first is his feeling and conviction of the power of the mind, that feeling and conviction which in his day raised the soaring constructions of German philosophy as well as of English poetry. Wherever this appears in Shelley it brings with it inspiration. It does so even when it appears in its Godwinian shape. There is a passage in the *Revolt of Islam* (VIII. xvi. ff.) where Cythna is assuring the sailors, terrified by their own guilt, that all the evil they have done has no power to enslave them; that they have only to recognize that it *is* evil, and it will fall away and leave them free. I know that this is not true, and that their minds cannot so free them without remorse and long often-failing effort; and yet I cannot read the speech without being moved and uplifted. And in *Prometheus* there is another great passage of this kind, to which I refer partly because it may remind us of something in which Shelley was the superior of all the contemporary poets: I mean his faith in science. This

[1] In the late poems the sun, as in Plato's *Republic*, is the visible image of the Absolute.

began in his youth, when Hogg observed that the fashionable clothes of the baronet's grandson were stained and perforated by his experiments in chemistry. In *Prometheus* it appears in that prophecy of man's future which ends with the stanza :

> The lightning is his slave ; heaven's utmost deep
> Gives up her stars, and, like a flock of sheep,
> They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on.
> The tempest is his steed ; he strides the air,
> And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
> " Heaven, hast thou secrets ? Man unveils me : I have none."

But I shall be reminded that this again is only in the future ; that Shelley's sense of present attainment was far from strong, and he himself was profoundly melancholy, and his " sweetest songs " those that told of " saddest thought." It is true ; but then is there any poet who has equalled the intensity of his aspiration ? If I were asked to name the most Shelleyan lines in Shelley, I think I should choose a stanza written within a few months of his death and left unfinished :

> I loved—oh no, I mean not one of ye,
> Or any earthly one, though ye are dear
> As human heart to human heart may be.
> I loved I know not what ; but this low sphere,
> And all that it contains, contains not thee,
> Thou whom, seen nowhere, I feel everywhere.

That is aspiration ; but so to aspire is to attain.

And so also, though Shelley is profoundly melancholy, even his saddest poems, even the *Stanzas Written in Dejection*, and the *Lament*, "Swifter far than summer's flight," do not make me sad, and hardly make me pity him. In this sorrow, however forlorn and deep, there is no bitterness; and in the soul that feels it, and can so utter it that sorrow becomes more beautiful than beauty's self, there is something above sorrow and beyond its reach. If it is true, as in various tongues and divers manners we are told, that except through loss and sorrow there is no attainment for the spirit of man, does it greatly matter that Shelley did not preach this truth, when his saddest poems make us feel that he had lived it?

ODOURS AND FLOWERS IN THE POETRY OF SHELLEY [1]

I DO not remember to have seen it noticed that the sense of smell plays an unusually large part in Shelley's poetry, and also that there is something highly characteristic and even peculiar in some of his references to odours. The author of *The Sensitive Plant* and *The Question* naturally wrote often elsewhere of flowers, and, even if he had only the average susceptibility to their fragrance, would, like Shakespeare and Milton, frequently refer to it. But to Shelley these odours, and those of which he writes in other poems, appear to have been not a whit less beautiful and expressive than light, or colour, or musical sound; and this is far from usual. They were to him, one may say, just as much outflows of a soul as are glances, gestures, smiles and sighs. Where the soul of the universe, the "one Spirit,"

[1] The references in this paper are to Mr. Hutchinson's Oxford edition. I have ignored Shelley's allusions to unpleasant smells, as these do not appear to be individually characteristic. The following abbreviations of titles are sometimes used: S.P. for *The Sensitive Plant*; Q. for *The Question*; P.U. for *Prometheus Unbound*; Ep. for *Epipsychidion*; R.H. for *Rosalind and Helen*.

Any reader interested in the subjects of the paper should consult Ellis's *Lexical Concordance to Shelley's Poetical Works*. He may find also many references to trees and flowers in Shelley's prose.

" that Beauty in which all things work and move," the Spirit of Love, is in question, these odours were overflowings of that. And when this Spirit appears incarnate in the " mortal shape " of a woman, it still breathes odours through her lips and from her hair.

I will illustrate these last statements from a few passages.

Most readers, if asked to quote one of Shelley's references to odours, would probably think first of the eight lines in which " Odours, when sweet violets sicken " are coupled, as on one level, with " Rose leaves, when the rose is dead," and with " Music, when soft voices die," and these three are compared with the thoughts of the beloved who is now absent.

The Moon replies to the Earth (*P.U.* iv. 325) :

> Brother mine, calm wanderer,
> Happy globe of land and air,
> Some Spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
> Which penetrates my frozen frame,
> And passes, with the warmth of flame,
> With love, and odour, and deep melody,
> Through me, through me.

There is a similar collocation in a passage some seventy lines before :

> And the wild odour of the mountain flowers,
> The music of the living grass and air,
> The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams.

Shelley, in *Rosalind and Helen*, had already written of the odours of the mountain flowers and their in-

fluence, with that of music, on the dying Lionel ; and then, in a passage too long for quotation, of a variety of odours (*e.g.* of " sea-buds," and burning frankincense and cedar), accompanied by the melody of an old air played on the harp (1015-23, 1081 ff.). In the ecstatic first stanza of *To Constantia, singing*, the " power, like light," in the singer's eyes is said to be still within her breath and on her hair, like odour, though the sounds which " burnt between her lips " are laid to sleep. I will choose but one more out of many similar passages. The *Unfinished Drama* (p. 528), an intensely Shelleyan fragment, has to do with a flower ; and of this we are told that

> you almost saw
> The pulses
> With which the purple velvet flower was fed
> To overflow, and, like a poet's heart
> Changing bright fancy to sweet sentiment,
> Changed half the light to fragrance.

I quote this merely because it may possibly indicate that, while light and colour and musical sound and odour appealed equally to Shelley, the appeal of odour was, as compared with that of light and colour, pre-eminently emotional ; as again he writes of a " music so delicate, soft, and intense, It was felt like an odour within the sense " (*S.P.* i. 28).

Readers of Shelley need not be reminded by quotations that for him all the beauty of finite forms and experiences, and therefore all the beauty of odours,

is, ultimately, an expression of the absolute Beauty and Love. That this itself can be fully expressed by none of them, and cannot itself be imagined, he knew well ; but none the less he was constantly impelled to imagine it, however vaguely, in a perfect feminine form, and to imagine the love of the sexes as a passionate attempt at union with this perfect being. And in poems dealing with that attempt odour, which meant so much to him, naturally plays its part.

It does so, for example, in the two longer poems devoted to this subject ; in *Alastor*, where the dream of this personal union leads to death [1] ; but much more decidedly in *Epipsychidion*, where the search for it is imagined as successful. Here the Being whom in his youth he had met only in dreams and visions, he now sees with his waking eyes. Of the earlier time he writes :

> In solitudes
> Her voice came to me through the whispering woods,
> And from the fountains, and the odours deep
> Of flowers, which, like lips murmuring in their sleep
> Of the sweet kisses which had lulled them there,
> Breathed but of her to the enamoured air.

[1] This, it appears to me, is really the main subject of *Alastor*, though the Preface implies that the failure of the hero comes from his " self-centred seclusion." That idea seems to be due to the influence of Wordsworth ; and, in the absence of the Preface, I doubt if one would trace it in the poem itself. The same influence is apparent in the rather later, but still early, *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* (see especially the last stanza), a poem in which love between the sexes is merely alluded to in a couple of lines.

When, in his search through the world for " one form, resembling hers, In which she might have masked herself from me," he is deceived by a " form " which reminds us of the Pandemian Aphrodite of the *Symposium*, we hear that " the breath of her false mouth was like faint flowers." But when the vision he had sought appears at last incarnate in Emily, we are told not only that " music from her respiration spread like light," but that " odours warm and fresh fell from her hair." And this repeats the preceding description (105 ff.) :

> Warm fragrance seems to fall from her light dress
> And her loose hair ; and, where some heavy tress
> The air of her own speed has disentwined,
> The sweetness seems to satiate the faint wind ;
> And in the soul a wild odour is felt,
> Beyond the sense, like fiery dews that melt
> Into the bosom of a frozen bud.

From her lips, too, when she speaks, " a liquid murmur drops, As from a hyacinth full of honey-dew." [1] And, finally, of the imagined island which is to be her home and his, we read (446) :

> The light clear element which the isle wears
> Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
> Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers,
> And falls upon the eyelids like faint sleep.

[1] The odour or fragrance occasionally ascribed in Shelley's poetry to " lips " is, of course, that of the breath : e.g. *On a faded Violet* :

> The odour from the flower is gone
> Which like thy kisses breathed on me.

Cf. *Revolt of Islam*, XI. vi.

The following are some unusual epithets, etc., referring to the odours of flowers : " wild," *Ep.* 109 ; " deep," *Ep.* 202 ; " arrowy," *Ep.* 451 ; " faint," *i.e.* producing feeling of faintness (see *Skylark*, 55, and compare " sense-dissolving," [1] *R.H.* 1251) ; " sighs," *Triumph of Life*, 14 ; " blasts," *Revolt*, v. li. 2222 ; " beams," *S.P.* i. 80 ; *The Question*, 30. For the *calming* influence of odours see *The Magnetic Lady*, 31.

The odorous flowers most often mentioned are the rose and the violet. The tuberose is " the sweetest flower for scent that blows," *S.P.* i. 38, and the narcissi are " the fairest " among all the flowers of the garden, *S.P.* i. 18.[2] Though the rose and violet hold unmistakably the place of honour in Shelley's poetry, grass and turf are often referred to as odorous and come next to them in frequency of mention. In *R.H.* 1110 he alludes to the power of odours in recalling times long past, " Like field smells known in infancy."

Of Shelley's poems *The Sensitive Plant* and *The Question* probably contain the largest number of references to flowers, and many of those mentioned in the one poem appear in the other. The two were probably written at about the same time in 1820, and

[1] The epithet " odour-faded blooms," *P.U.* III. iii. 137, may perhaps mean " exhausted by giving out odour."

[2] This is the only place where Shelley mentions this flower by name. Did he mean the white *N. poeticus*, so distinguished also by its scent ?

they are printed next to each other in Mrs. Shelley's edition.

Leaving the subject of odours, we may notice that in both these poems violets and windflowers appear at once and together, and Shelley speaks of the latter as "pied." This seems a strange epithet. As it can hardly mean windflowers of various colours, it may refer to the tinge of colour in white anemones. Another question suggests itself. What is the "tall flower" of *Q.* 13? Is it the "wand-like lily" of *S.P.* i. 33? It is also interesting to compare the first three lines of *Q.* stanza ii. with *The Invitation*, 58-9, where the same flowers occur together and the daisy is called "The daisy-star that never sets." The word "beams" in *Q.* stanza iv. is used in the same way in *S.P.* i. 80 and 92, and elsewhere by Shelley; and in *Ep.* 186 "this world of life" is compared with "a garden ravaged," and the reader is often reminded of *S.P.*

I have noticed no sign in Shelley's writings of an interest in botany; and Hogg, writing of his youth, says that he took none (*Life of Shelley*, i. p. 108. The incident recorded in the pages that follow has a bearing on *The Sensitive Plant*).

APPENDIX

The love of flowers must have been nearly, or quite, as marked in Keats as in Shelley (though I have not noticed allusions to their odours). Re-

ferring, for instance, to the early poem *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill*, we may find some twenty trees and flowers mentioned in its 240 lines, and again seventeen in the first 220 lines of *Endymion*. About a year before his death he wrote, in a letter to James Rice : "Like poor Falstaff, though I do not 'babble,' I think of green fields ; I muse with the greatest affection on every flower I have known from my infancy —their shapes and colours are as new to me as if I had just created them with a superhuman fancy. It is because they are connected with the most thoughtless and the happiest moments of our lives. I have seen foreign flowers in hothouses, of the most beautiful nature, but I do not care a straw for them. The simple flowers of our Spring are what I want to see again." When his death was near he asked his friend Severn to go and see the place chosen for his burial, and expressed pleasure at Severn's description of it, and (I quote Severn) "of the grass and the many flowers, particularly of the innumerable violets. Violets were his favourite flowers, and he joyed to hear how they overspread the graves. He assured me that he seemed already to feel the flowers growing over him."

COLERIDGE-ECHOES IN SHELLEY'S POEMS [1]

THE young Shelley was greatly influenced by the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, but this influence was of different kinds. He owed much to Wordsworth's spirit and ideas, but not much (so far as I have observed) to his images and diction, while images and words in Coleridge's poetry frequently recur in his own poems. The following are examples of these echoes.

I will begin with Coleridge's contributions to *Lyrical Ballads*, and first with *The Ancient Mariner*. But I have quoted from the text of that poem in J. Dykes Campbell's edition of Coleridge's Poetical Works, and not from the text of the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*; and I have not attempted to discover what text was used by Shelley.

(1) *Queen Mab*, i. 120.

Let even the restless gossamer
Sleep on the moveless air.

A.M. iii. 183.

Are those her sails that glance in the Sun
Like restless gossameres ?

[1] In this paper I have used the *Concordance* and the edition used in the paper on *Odours and Flowers*.

(2) *Queen Mab*, ii. 4.
Until the Sun's broad orb
Seemed resting on the burnished wave.
A.M. iii. 173.
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun.

(3) *Alastor*, 535.
and where irradiate dewy eyes
Had shone, gleam stony orbs.
A.M. vi. 436.
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

(4) *Alastor*, 202.
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
A.M. vi. 416.
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast.

(5) *Revolt of Islam*, i. vi.
A speck, a cloud, a shape,
A.M. iii. 152.
A certain shape, I wist.
A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist !

(6) *Revolt of Islam*, i. xlviii.
And swift and swifter grew the vessel's motion
A.M. vi. 460.
Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,

(7) *Revolt of Islam*, iii. xxi.
The uprest
Of the third sun
A.M. ii. 98.
The glorious Sun uprist :

(8) *The Sunset*, 17.
The broad and burning moon
A.M. iii. 179.
he [the sun] peered
With broad and burning face.

(9) *Epipsychidion*, 317.
And then what earthquakes made it gape and split,
The white Moon smiling all the while on it.
A.M. i. 69.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit.
A.M. i. 78.
Glimmered the white moon-shine.

(10) *Euganean Hills*, 1.
Many a green isle needs must be
In the deep wide sea of misery,
Or the mariner, worn and wan
A.M. iv. 233, vii. 599.
Alone on a wide wide sea!

(11) *Euganean Hills*, 240.
Till Death cried "I win, I win!"
A.M. iii. 197.
The game is done! I've won! I've won!

(12) *A Vision of the Sea*, 18.
While the surf, like a chaos of stars, like a rout
Of death-flames, like whirlpools of fire-flaming iron,
A.M. ii. 127.
About, about, in reel and rout,
The death-fires danced at night;

(13) *A Vision of the Sea*, 47.
Where the death-darting sun cast no shadow at noon,
And there seemed to be fire in the beams of the moon,
A.M. ii. 111.
All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

(14) *A Vision of the Sea*, 58.

One after one
The mariners died

A.M. iii. 219.

They dropped down one by one.

The rare word "clift," *Arethusa*, 71, occurs in *A.M.* i. 55; "thunderfit," *Euganean Hills*, 182, in *A.M.* i. 69; "the western wave," in *To Night*, in *A.M.* iii. 171.

In addition to *The Ancient Mariner* Coleridge contributed to *Lyrical Ballads* three poems. With *The Foster-mother's Tale*, 15, "lost in inward vision," compare "lost in stormy visions," *Adonais*, xxxix. With *The Nightingale*, 9, "vernal showers," compare *To a Skylark*, 56, "sound of vernal showers"; and with "influxes," 27, *Alastor*, 641, "the influxes of sense."

The following are references to some of Coleridge's other poems.

Kubla Khan, 9.	incense-bearing tree.
Revolt, XII. xix.	incense-bearing forests.
Kubla Khan, 13.	cedarn.
Revolt, XII. xxxiii.	cedarn.
Kubla Khan, 25.	mazy motion.
Queen Mab, ii. 74.	mazy motion.
Kubla Khan, 34.	rare device.
Revolt, I. xxiii.	rare device.
Kubla Khan, 35.	pleasure-dome.
Unfinished Drama, 91.	pleasure-dome.

Love, 75.

And gentle wishes long subdued,
Subdued and cherished long.

Revolt, VI. xxxix.

the gentle might
Of earliest love, delayed and cherished long.

Autumnal Evening, 70.

And gaze upon her with a thousand eyes.

Revolt, IX. xxxvi.

Which gazes on thee with its thousand eyes.

Sonnet to Bowles.

Like that great Spirit, who with plastic sweep

Adonais, xliii.

the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dead world.

Remorse, V. i. 274.

Till Desolation seemed a beautiful thing.

Prometheus, i. 772.

Ah, sister, Desolation is a delicate thing.

France, 7.

imperious branches swinging
Have made a solemn music of the wind.

Alastor, 563.

swinging boughs ; 567, solemn song.

France, 28. disenchanted nation.
Prometheus, i. 567. disenchanted nation.
France, 37. tyrant-quelling.
Prometheus, iv. 272. tyrant-quelling.
France, 96. obscener slaves.
Revolt, IX. xvi. obscener slaves.

France, 98.

homeless winds, and playmate of the waves.

Alastor, 566. homeless streams.

Alastor, 607.

The very winds, Danger's grim playmates.

Fire, Famine and Slaughter, 17.

Whisper it, sister ! so and so !

Prometheus, i. 105.
Make us keep silence, thus and thus.
To a young friend, 37.
the rock's collected tears.
The Question, ii. 7.
Heaven's collected tears.

I have noticed in Shelley's poems some words and phrases which might well be echoes of *Christabel*; but they are neither numerous nor certainly echoes.

COLERIDGE'S USE OF LIGHT AND COLOUR [1]

THE poems of Coleridge, and the extracts from his note-books published under the title *Anima Poetæ*, bear witness in abundance to the influence of light and colour on his mind. Throughout his life he was intensely interested in them, interested both as a poet and as a philosopher. He observed them with the intentness and accuracy of a painter or a man of science. He could use and describe them with that spontaneous felicity which rarely failed him when his object, whether outward or inward, was clearly pictured or firmly grasped; and sometimes their emotional or imaginative significance is vaguely indicated or openly expressed in his description. References to them abound in his minor poems, sometimes forming the only portion that arrests attention or remains in memory; and the difference of effect between *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel* depends largely on the contrasted ways in which colour is used. That dependence will be shown

[1] Contributed to "A Miscellany, presented to John Macdonald Mackay, LL.D., July, 1914: Liverpool, The University Press." In quoting from Coleridge's poems I have used the text and punctuation of J. D. Campbell's edition of the Poetical Works.

later, but I will first illustrate these statements from the other poems and from *Anima Poetæ*.

In the Ode called *Dejection* Coleridge writes :

> All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
> Have I been gazing on the western sky,
> And its peculiar tint of yellow green :

and later in the poem he recurs to " that green light that lingers in the west." According to Trelawny, in his *Recollections of Byron and Shelley*, p. 31, Byron called this " fustian," and asked, " Who ever saw a green sky ? " Now, in England at any rate, what Coleridge describes can be seen at least twice or thrice in a year ; but perhaps he was the first poet to describe or mention it.

In *Remorse*, Act IV. Scene i., Isidore, as he lights a torch in a dark cavern, remarks :

> A lighted torch in the hand
> Is no unpleasant object here—one's breath
> Floats round the flame, and makes as many colours
> As the thin clouds that travel near the moon.

In Coleridge's translation of Schiller's *Piccolomini*, II. iv. 85, Thekla tells how, leaving the broad sunshine, she entered a dark room in a castle tower ; and she continues :

> and now
> The narrowing line of day-light, that ran after
> The closing door, was gone.

There is nothing corresponding with this in the original (III. iv.) : it is an addition by Coleridge.

The following is from *Lewti* :

I saw a cloud of palest hue,
  Onward to the moon it passed ;
Still brighter and more bright it grew,
With floating colours not a few,
  Till it reach'd the moon at last :
Then the cloud was wholly bright,
With a rich and amber light.

Near the beginning of *Fears in Solitude* come these lines :

but the dell,
Bathed by the mist, is fresh and delicate
As vernal corn-field, or the unripe flax,
When, through its half-transparent stalks, at eve,
The level sunshine glimmers with green light.

In *The Three Graves* three friends are described as sitting on a sunny morning beneath holly-trees which form a kind of arbour ; and one of them says (Part iv. l. 505) :

" The Sun peeps through the close thick leaves,
  See, dearest Ellen ! see !
'Tis in the leaves, a little sun,
  No bigger than your ee ;

A tiny sun, and it has got
  A perfect glory too ;
Ten thousand threads and hairs of light
Make up a glory gay and bright
  Round that small orb, so blue."

And then they argued of those rays,
  What colour they might be ;
Says this, " They're mostly green " ; says that,
" They're amber-like to me."

Frost at Midnight ends thus :

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw ; whether the eave-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

This Lime-tree Bower my Prison contains the following lines (47-56) :

Pale beneath the blaze
Hung the transparent foliage ; and I watched
Some broad and sunny leaf, and loved to see
The shadow of the leaf and stem above,
Dappling its sunshine ! And that walnut-tree
Was richly tinged, and a deep radiance lay
Full on the ancient ivy, which usurps
Those fronting elms, and now, with blackest mass
Makes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
Through the late twilight.

The Picture has the following passage, perhaps less familiar (ll. 122 f.) :

Lo ! stealing through the canopy of firs,
How fair the sunshine spots that mossy rock,
Isle of the river, whose disparted waves
Dart off asunder with an angry sound,
How soon to re-unite ! And see ! they meet,
Each in the other lost and found : and see
Placeless, as spirits, one soft water-sun
Throbbing within them, heart at once and eye !

With its soft neighbourhood of filmy clouds,
The stains and shadings of forgotten tears,
Dimness o'erswum with lustre !

We may end with part of the lovely song of Glycine in *Zapolya*, II. i. 65 :

A sunny shaft did I behold,
From sky to earth it slanted :
And poised therein a bird so bold—
Sweet bird, thou wert enchanted !

He sunk, he rose, he twinkled, he trolled
Within that shaft of sunny mist ;
His eyes of fire, his beak of gold,
All else of amethyst !

Ought not that (or, rather, the whole of the song) to be in the *Golden Treasury* ?

This collection of passages, as will be plain to any one who remembers *The Ancient Mariner*, does not fully represent Coleridge's use of light and colour ; but it is highly characteristic and represents fairly a large number of other passages, mostly much inferior in poetic value. We observe in it at once his eager curiosity. Of this curiosity there are traces in Shelley too, but on the whole it is distinctive of Coleridge among the poets of his time. There is in it something of the man of science, but more of the child, delighted with a new, "funny," lovely thing, and loving it for its beauty ; and the " childlike " spirit is an endearing quality in Coleridge, which never deserted him, and is signalized by himself in

A Tombless Epitaph and excellently dwelt on in Professor Elton's chapter on the Coleridges.[1] Next to this curiosity we notice in the quotations that light seems to be, to say the least, as fascinating to Coleridge as colour; and this again might perhaps be said of Shelley, but certainly of no other contemporary poet. Not only is this so, but it will be found also, I believe, that, except where he has a particular poetic effect in view, the colour that Coleridge describes is seldom vivid, rich, or deep; it is rather, so to speak, colour where it is nearest to mere light or shade. The "rivers of gold 'twixt crimson banks" of *Fancy in Nubibus*, and the vivid apparitions of *The Ancient Mariner*, are not characteristic of what one may call the normal Coleridge: the stanzas quoted above from the *Three Graves* are so. And the same tendency is illustrated by his fondness for moonlight. This is not shown in its due prominence in my quotations, but, to remind oneself of it, one need only recall *Christabel* and the one exquisite verse-passage in the *Wanderings of Cain*, and remember that the scene in *Love* is a moonlit scene, and the occasion of *Dejection* the sight of "the new moon with the old moon in her arm."

Turning now to Coleridge's prose, I will quote first a couple of sentences from *Biographia Literaria*, chapter vii.:

[1] *A Survey of English Literature*, 1780-1830.

Most of my readers will have observed a small water-insect on the surface of rivulets, which throws a cinque-spotted shadow fringed with prismatic colours on the sunny bottom of the brook ; and will have noticed how the little animal wins its way up against the stream, by alternate pulses of active and passive motion, now resisting the current, and now yielding to it in order to gather strength and a momentary *fulcrum* for a further propulsion. This is no unapt emblem of the mind's self-experience in the act of thinking.

I will now transcribe from *Anima Poetæ* a few passages out of some five and thirty which had seemed suitable for quotation. In the space of three pages (9-12) these notes occur :

Slanting pillars of misty light moved along under the sun hid by clouds . . .

Leaves of trees up-turned by the stirring wind in twilight—an image of paleness, wan affright . . .

The thin scattered rain-clouds were scudding along the sky ; above them, with a visible interspace, the crescent moon hung, and partook not of the motion ; her own hazy light filled up the concave, as if it had been painted and the colours had run.

These notes belong to 1799 and 1800. The following, on pages 172 and 175, belong to 1806 and 1807 :

As when the taper's white cone of flame is seen double, till the eye moving brings them into one space and then they become one—so did the idea in my imagination coadunate [1] with your present form soon after I first gazed upon you . . .

Blue sky through the glimmering interspaces of the

[1] A botanical term for " unite."

dark elms at twilight rendered a lovely deep yellow-green —all the rest a delicate blue.

I will not trouble the reader with remarks on these passages, but perhaps I may help him to realize the part that appearances of light and colour played in Coleridge's experience if I quote from the notes printed on pages 54 to 56. First comes this :

> The soul within the body—can I, any way, compare this to the reflection of the fire seen through my window on the solid wall, seeming, of course, within the solid wall, as deep within as the distance of the fire from the wall ? I fear I can make nothing of it ;

and thereupon he leaves it, to speculate on the reason why he always hurries away from any interesting thought to do something uninteresting. Then comes this note :

> As I was sitting at the foot of my bed, reading with my face downwards, I saw a phantom of my face upon the nightcap which lay just on the middle of my pillow —it was indistinct but of bright colours, and came only as my head bent low. Was it the action of the rays of my face upon my eyes ? that is, did my eyes see my face, and from the sidelong and faint action of the rays place the image in that situation ? But I moved the nightcap and I lost it ;

just, one may add, as he lost the thought of the preceding note, and thousands of other more or less promising thoughts. The next begins :

> I have only to shut my eyes to feel how ignorant I am whence these forms and coloured forms, and colours dis-

tinguishable beyond what I can distinguish, derive their birth ;

and, after asking some questions which he cannot answer, he adds that these eye-spectra change with every voluntary bodily movement, " as, for instance, if I press my legs or change sides." The fourth note enshrines the resolution at least to make the attempt to explain to himself the origin of moral evil, by reference to a source with which light and colour do not seem to be concerned ; but, in the fifth, he interrupts the consideration of this source in order to " note the beautiful luminous shadow of my pencil-point which follows it from the candle, or rather goes before it and illuminates the word I am writing " ; and in the sixth he describes the flame that he produced by lighting a composition of " rolled bits of paper, many tiny bits of wick, some tallow, and the soap." The experiment was no more fruitful than the thought about the soul within the body or the resolution to explain the origin of moral evil ; for " the whole flame, equal in size to half a dozen candles, did not give the light of one, and the letters of the book looked by the unsteady flare just as through tears or in dizziness,"—or, an enemy might suggest, just as Schelling's ideas look in the philosophy of Coleridge.

We may turn lastly to *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*. These two poems, it is obvious, have much in common, but they are also sharply con-

trasted, and that in a way which only heightens our sense of the "marvellous"[1] powers of the poet. In the pace of the narrative, the number of its events, and its agitation or quietness; in the emotional tone of the impressions produced by it; and in the character of its supernatural atmosphere, they are utterly different. Each poem is full of pictures; but the light and colour of these pictures are, on the whole, diametrically opposed. This last contrast is our only subject here.

In the main, the colouring in *The Ancient Mariner* is brilliant and vivid, often fantastic, here and there even bizarre. It is the colouring of the green ocean; the emerald icebergs; the broad burning face of the sun; the bloody sun in a hot and copper sky; the western wave all aflame; the hundred fire-flags sheen; the lightning that falls in a river deep and wide; the sea that burns blue and green and white like a witch's oils; the still and awful red of the ship's shadow; the blue, glossy green and velvet black of the water-snakes, whose every track was a flash of golden fire; the crimson of the angelic shapes; the red lips and yellow locks of the nightmare Life-in-Death; and even when we leave the world of enchantment for that of common life the colour remains, and the bride who walks to the wedding feast is red as a rose. There is moonlight in *The Ancient*

[1] Wordsworth's *Extempore effusion upon the death of James Hogg.*

Mariner; who could forget it? But it is there chiefly to contrast with the baleful hues of the haunted voyage, intimating the presence of the spirit of peace and love, or lighting the bay and steeping in silentness the weathercock of the church of the mariner's native village.

In *Christabel* (more especially in the First Part) there is very little colour, and the light is almost everywhere subdued. The air, in Shelley's phrase, is "woven out of moon-beams," and they are not the beams that lit the bay. A thin grey cloud is spread on high; and, though there is a full moon, it looks small and dull. In its light Geraldine's silken robe, itself colourless, shines shadowy; and, though the gems entangled in her hair glitter wildly, they flash no tints. The light in the hall, as the flame flickers for a moment from the white ashes, shows no gorgeous hues of tapestries on the wall; it just glimmers on the boss of the shield in a murky niche. The carven work in Christabel's chamber is faintly seen by the light of a silver lamp (not a golden one) which burns dead and dim. She trims it and it is bright, but it discloses no colour in the room. Geraldine had told her story already in the wood, but even in her story there was no colour: her palfrey was white, and so were the steeds of her assailants. Now in the chamber her fair large eyes glitter bright, but their colour we must not know. Her dress slips to her feet, and Christabel sees a sight

to dream of, not to tell. It is more terrible, we feel, than the face of Life-in-Death, but, unlike that face, it is left undescribed.[1] When, in the story of the Second Part, Geraldine turns her serpent eyes on Christabel, they do not gaze or flash, they blink dull and shy. In the whole poem there is hardly a touch of colour beyond the green of the snake in Bracy's dream, the blue of Christabel's eyes and of the veins of the Witch's feet, the green of the moss and mistletoe on the oak, and the red of its last leaf.

In contrasting these wonderful poems in one particular respect I am not suggesting a comparison of merit. As I read them Wordsworth's phrase " the heaven-eyed creature " recurs to me, and Hazlitt's declaration that Coleridge was the only person he ever knew who answered to the idea of a man of genius (though Hazlitt knew Wordsworth and Keats and Shelley). But, for the reasons already given, I cannot but think that *Christabel*, or at least the First Part, is the more totally and utterly Coleridgian of the two poems. The colours of *The Ancient Mariner* are imagined for a poetic purpose, and the purpose is achieved to perfection; but they are not the colours that Coleridge's eyes saw when they were shut, nor those that rose before his dreaming imagination when, as so often happened, it was left to do what it would.

[1] And the touches of description which, we know from a manuscript, were present at first, Coleridge struck out.

KEATS AND "PHILOSOPHY" [1]

In his poems occasionally, and in his letters more often, Keats mentions something which he calls "philosophy." What did he mean by the word, and what was his attitude to the thing? This question, it is almost needless to say, is answered in Colvin's *Life of John Keats*; but, as was inevitable, it is answered very concisely, and perhaps some readers of the present volume may care to consider it more at length.

The central article of the faith of Keats is given in the words "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." These two are reached, apprehended, and expressed in different ways; beauty in or through sense and imagination, truth in or by "thought," "knowledge," or "philosophy." But the two are none the less one and the same; so that whatever is felt, perceived, imagined as beautiful, would, if adequately expressed in an intellectual form, be found a reality truly conceived; and truth, adequately transformed into the shape of "sensation" or imagination, would

[1] This paper, which may be taken as an addition to the lecture on the Letters of Keats in *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, appeared in *The John Keats Memorial Volume*, February, 1921.

have turned into beauty. So, without aiming at precision in terminology, we may enlarge Keats's *dictum* " Beauty is truth, truth beauty."

In this faith he never wavered, but there is a difference in his attitude towards its two aspects. On the one hand, being a born poet, he desired truth, and the knowledge or philosophy that might lead to it, mainly, if not solely, for the enlargement or deepening that they might give to his perception and imagination of beauty ; and, besides, he was *certain* that " what the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth," [1] while he had not the same personal assurance (if we may so call it) that truth must be beautiful. On the other hand, while almost from the first he felt strongly his need of knowledge or philosophy, the feeling became more and more insistent as he advanced. In the earlier days, though he was keenly conscious of this need, he could break out, " O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts ! " [2] or declare that reflection " spoils the singing of the nightingale " (*Epistle to Reynolds*), or hear the thrush calling to him, " O fret not after knowledge " (*O thou whose face*). But even then he was giving voice to a momentary mood, and was longing for a time, " many years " distant, when he would " grow high-rife with old Philosophy " (*On a Lock of Milton's Hair*). Only two months later, he

[1] Letter XXII., p. 41, in Colvin's *Letters of John Keats*.

[2] XXII., p. 42.

was writing, with an equally exaggerated emphasis, "I find earlier days are gone by—I find I can have no enjoyment in the world but continual drinking of knowledge. . . . I have been hovering for some time between an exquisite sense of the luxurious and a love for philosophy—were I calculated for the former, I should be glad. But as I am not, I shall turn all my soul to the latter." [1] And, as time went on (months, alas, rather than years), this feeling became a constant longing, mounting now and again to an "agony," and expressed in terms that might befit the lips of one born for "philosophy" in the strictest sense of that term.

The word "knowledge" in the passage just quoted, and usually with Keats, has the same meaning as "philosophy." What then did "philosophy" mean to him? Certainly not merely what it means when philosophy is contrasted with hasty passion, or when a man is advised to take his troubles philosophically. Not, on the other hand, philosophy in the strict or technical sense. With that he was, apparently, totally unacquainted; yet he always writes as though he had some philosophy of his own, though he hoped for much more. He speaks of the philosophy of Milton and Wordsworth, not of Locke or Berkeley. He uses the name of Plato for a rhyme in a jocular poem, but there is no sign that he had read a word of Plato or knew that Plato had written of beauty

[1] L., p. 100.

as well as truth. He speaks with enthusiasm of Hazlitt as a critic, but never mentions Hazlitt's *Principles of Human Action*. The Godwinian ideas which fascinated Shelley and his own friend Dilke he rejects with distaste, but, so far as we can see, was not acquainted with them at first hand. The philosophy already known in his own experience and legible in his writings was evidently such reflection on human nature and life and the world as any thoughtful man may practise; a reflection intent, no doubt, but neither technical nor systematic. He longed for advance in it because, he hoped, it would lighten "the burden of the mystery." Where it might possibly have led him at last we may conjecture when we find him telling Reynolds that he proposes to "ask Hazlitt in about a year's time the best metaphysical road" he can take.[1] But it is clear that he never set foot on that road, though his letters amply prove that in a year's time his own philosophy had notably deepened and was also extending its bounds.

Can we tell what aspect of things most especially and constantly reminded Keats of "the burden of the mystery" and of his need of philosophy? Two or three quotations may answer this question. In the verse-letter to Reynolds, written almost at the same time as the prose-letter from which I have just quoted, he interrupts himself thus:

[1] LI., p. 101.

. . . but my flag is not unfurled
On the Admiral-staff,—and so philosophize
I dare not yet! Oh, never will the prize,
High reason, and the lore [1] of good and ill,
Be my award!

Presently he goes on to relate how he was sitting upon a

. . . rock of green sea-weed
Among the breakers; 'twas a quiet eve,
The rocks were silent, the wide sea did weave
An untumultuous fringe of silver foam
Along the flat brown sand; I was at home
And should have been most happy,—but I saw
Too far into the sea, where every maw
The greater on the less feeds evermore.—
But I saw too distinct into the core
Of an eternal fierce destruction,
And so from happiness I far was gone.
* * * * * * *
Still do I that most fierce destruction see,
The Shark at savage prey,—the Hawk at pounce,—
The gentle Robin, like a Pard or Ounce,
Ravening a Worm.

A month or so later he is writing to Reynolds [2] his description (almost too famous to quote) of the first

[1] This word is printed "love" in all editions known to me; but I cannot believe that Keats wrote "love." A printer's substitution of *v* for *r* is quite probable. Keats never saw the poem in print; and, though he hoped for acquiescence, through philosophy, in some kinds of "ill," I remember no place where he speaks of loving them. With the quotation above compare the words about good and evil in the next prose quotation. The same emendation of "love" was suggested, of course independently, by Mr. H. Stuart in *The Times Literary Supplement* of May 26, 1921, and was accepted by Colvin, *ib.* June 9.

[2] LII., p. 107.

two chambers in the mansion of life, the only two yet opened to him,—the thoughtless chamber, and the second, to which " we are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle within us. We no sooner get into the second chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere ; we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight. However, among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man—of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heart-break, Pain, Sickness, and oppression—whereby this Chamber of Maiden-Thought becomes gradually darkened, and at the same time, on all sides of it, many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages—we see not the balance of good and evil—we are in a mist—*we* are now in that state—we feel the ' burden of the Mystery ' " (he is quoting from Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* poem). A few weeks later he writes to Bailey, " Were it in my choice, I would reject a Petrarchal coronation—on account of my dying day, and because women have cancers." [1]

The result of this strain of thought, which appears again and again, is a settled conviction that wisdom

[1] LIV. p. 112. It is, perhaps, worth noting that in these passages there is only one reference to moral evil (" oppression ").

is sorrow, happiness possible only to the thoughtless, life something to be "undergone." Its further result is a longing to help, a determination to "do some good for the world." Not that this means a determination to abandon poetry; *his* way of doing good must be through poetry. Only, now, poetry cannot rest on an abandonment of the thought that has opened his eyes to misery; nor can it consist in simply saying "the most heart-easing things" (*Sleep and Poetry*). On the contrary, the one way forward for him is through more and more thought, knowledge, philosophy—something to give enlightenment and depth to his unshaken faith that "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," and that therefore all this evil in Nature and human life cannot be the wholly hideous thing that it appears.

Isabella, or the Pot of Basil, a poem in which the extreme of suffering puts on a face of sad, but perfect, beauty, shows his advance on this road. *Hyperion*, refashioned as he intended, would doubtless have shown it more explicitly. And it is no less evident in the later letters, down to the time when his life began to ebb. He does "dare" to philosophize. He still does so on his own account, without help from any metaphysician whom Hazlitt might have recommended. And he reaches results, or throws out suggestions, which must be new to many thoughtful readers, and would not be disdained by students of philosophy. Far the best example is to be found

in a portion of one of his long journal-letters to George and Georgiana Keats, who were settled in America.[1] Here he sets aside both the " vale of tears " doctrine of popular orthodoxy and the " perfectibility " doctrine of Dilke and Shelley, and, very apologetically, develops the idea that the obstacles and hardships which may seem mere lamentable evils, and to him had once seemed incompatible with the Beauty which yet must be truth, are necessary to the formation and development of individual souls. This passage is given at length in my *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* and I will not quote it, and will merely point out what a startling reversal of the once-popular notion of Keats is implied in the fact that it is quoted in full " as a suitable introduction " to five lectures by one of the subtlest and deepest of living philosophers.[2] But the same strain of thought appears in an earlier part of the letter,[3] and I will quote and comment on the passage because, imperfect as it is, it illustrates much that has been said in this paper.

Friday, 19th March (1819).

This morning I am in a sort of temper, indolent and supremely careless—I long after a Stanza or two of Thomson's Castle of Indolence—my passions are all asleep, from my having slumbered till nearly eleven, and weakened the animal fibre all over me, to a delightful sensation, about three degrees on this side of faintness.

[1] XCII. pp. 254-7.

[2] Bosanquet, *The Value and Destiny of the Individual*, p. 63.

[3] XCII. pp. 234-8.

If I had teeth of pearl and the breath of lilies I should call it languor, but as I am [1] I must call it laziness. In this state of effeminacy the fibres of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body, and to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show of enticement and pain no unbearable power. Neither Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love [2] have any alertness of countenance as they pass by me; they seem rather like figures on a Greek vase—a Man and two women whom no one but myself could distinguish in their disguisement.[3] This is the only happiness, and is a rare instance of the advantage of the body overpowering the Mind. I have this moment received a note from Haslam, in which he expects the death of his Father, who has been for some time in a state of insensibility; his mother bears up he says very well—I shall go to town to-morrow to see him. This is the world—thus we cannot expect to give way many hours to pleasure. Circumstances are like Clouds continually gathering and bursting—While we are laughing, the seed of some trouble is put into the wide arable land of events, while we are laughing it sprouts it grows and suddenly bears a poison fruit which we must pluck. Even so we have leisure to reason on the misfortunes of our friends; our own touch us too nearly for words. Very few men have ever arrived at a complete disinterestedness of Mind: very few have been influenced by a pure desire of the benefit of others,—in the greater part of the Benefactors to Humanity some meretricious motive has sullied their greatness—some melodramatic scenery has fasci-

[1] "Especially as I have a black eye" (Keats's note).

[2] See line 13 of the sonnet which closes the extract.

[3] "To about this date must belong the posthumously printed *Ode on Indolence*, which describes the same mood with nearly the same imagery. Possibly the 'black eye' . . . together with the reflections on street-fighting later on, may help us to fix the date of his famous fight with the butcher boy" (Colvin's note. See also his *Life*, p. 253).

nated them.[1] From the manner in which I feel Haslam's misfortune I perceive how far I am from any humble standard of disinterestedness. Yet this feeling ought to be carried to its highest pitch,[2] as there is no fear of its ever injuring society—which it would do, I fear, pushed to an extremity. For in wild nature the Hawk would lose his Breakfast of Robins and the Robin his of Worms —The Lion must starve as well as the Swallow. The greater part of Men make their way with the same instinctiveness, the same unwandering eye from their purposes, the same animal eagerness as the Hawk. The Hawk wants a Mate, so does the Man—look at them both, they set about it and procure one in the same manner. They want both a nest and they both set about one in the same manner—they get their food in the same manner. The noble animal Man for his amusement smokes his pipe—the Hawk balances about the clouds —that is the only difference of their leisures. This it is that makes the Amusement of Life—to a speculative Mind—I go among the Fields and catch a glimpse of a Stoat or a field-mouse peeping out of the withered grass —the creature hath a purpose, and its eyes are bright with it. I go amongst the buildings of a city and I see a Man hurrying along—to what? the Creature has a purpose and his eyes are bright with it. But then, as Wordsworth says, " We have all one human heart——" [3] There is an electric fire in human nature tending to purify —so that among these human creatures there is con-

[1] "There are two distinct tempers of mind in which we judge of things—the worldly, theatrical and pantomimical; and the unearthly, spiritual and ethereal—in the former Buonaparte, Lord Byron and this Charmian hold the first place in our Minds; in the latter, John Howard, Bishop Hooker rocking his child's cradle, and you my dear Sister are the conquering feelings." (LXXIII. p. 173.) "This Charmian" is a lady he had met: the "Sister" is his sister-in-law.

[2] *I.e.* the highest there is any chance of its attaining.

[3] *The Cumberland Beggar.*

tinually some birth of new heroism. The pity is that we must wonder at it, as we should at finding a pearl in rubbish. I have no doubt that thousands of people never heard of have had hearts completely disinterested. I can remember but two [1]—Socrates and Jesus—Their histories evince it. What I heard a little time ago, Taylor observe with respect to Socrates, may be said of Jesus—That he was so great a man that though he transmitted no writing of his own to posterity, we have his Mind and his sayings and his greatness handed to us by others. It is to be lamented that the history of the latter was written and revised by Men interested in the pious frauds of Religion. Yet through all this I see his splendour. Even here,[2] though I myself am pursuing the same instinctive course as the veriest human animal you can think of, I am, however young, writing at random, straining at particles of light in the midst of a great darkness, without knowing the bearing of any one assertion, of any one opinion. Yet may I not in this be free from sin ? May there not be superior beings amused with any graceful, though instinctive, attitude my mind may fall into as I am entertained with the alertness of a Stoat or the anxiety of a Deer.[3] Though a quarrel in the Streets is a thing to be hated, the energies displayed in it are fine ; the commonest Man shows a grace in his quarrel. By a superior Being our reasonings may take the same tone—though erroneous they may be fine. This is the very thing in which consists Poetry, and if so

[1] Two *famous* men, or " Benefactors to Humanity."

[2] Keat's punctuation in this passage obscures his meaning, which would be clear if " though " were repeated before " I am," and if a comma were substituted for the full-stop after " opinion."

[3] LXXX. p. 201 : " Mrs. Tighe and Beattie once delighted me —now I see through them and can find nothing in them but weakness, and yet how many they still delight ! Perhaps a superior being may look upon Shakespeare in the same light—is it possible ? No—— "

it is not so fine a thing as a philosophy—For the same reason that an eagle is not so fine a thing as a truth. Give me this credit—Do you not think I strive—to know myself? Give me this credit, and you will not think that on my own account I repeat Milton's lines—

> "How charming is divine Philosophy,
> Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
> But musical as is Apollo's lute."

No—not for myself—feeling grateful as I do to have got into a state of mind to relish them properly. Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced—Even a Proverb is no proverb to you till your Life has illustrated it.[1] I am ever afraid that your anxiety for me will lead you to fear for the violence of my temperament continually smothered down: for that reason I did not intend to have sent you the following sonnet—but look over the two last pages and ask yourselves whether I have not that in me which will bear the buffets of the world. It will be the best comment on my sonnet; it will show you that it was written with no Agony but that of ignorance; with no thirst of anything but Knowledge when pushed to the point though the first steps to it were through my human passions—they went away and I wrote with my Mind—and perhaps I must confess a little bit of my heart—

Why did I laugh to-night? No voice will tell:
No God, no Deamon of severe response
Deigns to reply from heaven or from Hell.—
Then to my human heart I turn at once—
Heart! thou and I are here sad and alone
Say, wherefore did I laugh? O mortal pain!
O Darkness! Darkness! ever must I moan,
To question Heaven and Hell and Heart in vain!

[1] LII. p. 105: "Axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses."

Why did I laugh? I know this being's lease,
My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads:
Yet could I on this very midnight cease,[1]
And the world's gaudy ensigns see in shreds;
Verse, fame and Beauty are intense indeed
But Death intenser—Death is Life's high mead.

I went to bed and enjoyed an uninterrupted sleep. Sane I went to bed and sane I arose.[2]

This is not altogether a favourable specimen of Keats's correspondence. Something of that fault, deplored in an earlier letter, of "continually running away from the subject," makes it difficult to follow; and his languid mood probably adds to the difficulty. But the words "This is the only happiness"; the reference to that thirst for knowledge which sometimes became an "agony"; the feeling, expressed in the sonnet, that knowledge, though it may throw gleams on the mist, cannot disperse it; the implied ascription of "philosophy" to Milton; the absence of any idea that the possibility of disinterestedness has been denied (a question discussed in Hazlitt's *Principles*)—all this illustrates the habitual attitude which I have attempted to describe, while the fuller and clearer reasonings on the "Vale of Soul-making" are prepared for by the reflections on disinterestedness.

[1] "Compare the repetition of the same thought and phrase in the *Ode to a Nightingale*, written two months later" (Colvin's Note).

[2] The sonnet was composed, apparently, on the evening of the day preceding that on which he is now writing. Compare the *Ben Nevis* sonnet.

These are due to an accident. Keats has just heard of a friend's misfortune, and the fact that he feels it much less than he would a misfortune of his own shows him how far he is from "any humble standard of disinterestedness." He proceeds to comment on that virtue.

The comment is double-edged; and so from other passages in the Letters we should expect it to be. On the one hand, they show how much he admired disinterestedness. He disclaims the notion that "works of genius are the first things in this world. No! for that sort of probity and disinterestedness which such men as Bailey possess, does hold and grasp the tiptop of any spiritual honours that can be paid to anything in this world." [1] In telling Bailey that he is very fond of his sister-in-law, and "likes her better and better," he adds, "She is the most disinteresteded woman I ever knew." [2] On the other hand, he proceeds, "She goes beyond degree in it"; and we may contrast his present uneasiness concerning his sympathy with Haslam with this passage: "The first thing that strikes me on hearing a Misfortune having befallen another is this—'Well, it cannot be helped: he will have the pleasure of trying the resources of his Spirit.'" [3] In the same way he repeatedly expresses in later letters his impatience at Dilke's excessive anxiety to shield his boy from little troubles, and writes to Dilke himself: "I am sorry

[1] XXVIII. p. 54. [2] LIV. p. 113. [3] XXII. p. 43.

to hear that Charles is so much oppress'd at Westminster, though I am sure it will be the finest touchstone for his Metal in the world. . . . The very first Battle he wins will lift him from the Tribe of Manasseh." [1]

This double-sided view reappears in the discussion before us. Disinterestedness is an electric fire tending to purify human creatures and thrill them into heroism. He admires it alike in the thousands of obscure persons who have had hearts completely disinterested, and in the only two famous men he can remember of whom that can be said. Nor has he any fear that the demand for it can, *in practice*, be too emphatic. But on the other hand he perceives that this demand cannot be made absolute, so as to exclude that direct "instinctive" pursuit of objects into which consideration of others does not enter. The life of Nature, he observes, depends on such pursuit, carried indeed so far that it involves the destruction of one creature by another; and here, it will be noticed, he mentions those very proceedings of the hawk and the robin which had once horrified him and appeared incompatible with Beauty, but which now his philosophy has taught him to accept (see the end of the verse-quotation on p. 108). And then he goes further. That direct pursuit of objects in which disinterestedness plays no part must be admitted, also, in human life. It has its place, and

[1] CIX. p. 279.

we ourselves can perceive a beauty in it; we can even perceive this in actions (such as a street-quarrel) which, taken as wholes, are hateful. These very reflections of his own are an instance of such instinctive action; and, even if they are erroneous, a superior Being might still see something "fine" in them, as we do in the alertness of a stoat or the grace of a quarrelling man.

A few words may be added with reference to the closing lines of the sonnet:

> Verse, fame and Beauty are intense indeed,
> But Death intenser—Death is Life's high mead.

We may compare with them not only the stanza of the *Ode to a Nightingale* (see above), but the last lines of the early sonnet *When I have fears that I may cease to be*:

> . . . then on the shore
> Of the wide world I stand alone, and think,
> Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink:

and again the close of the *Hyperion* fragment, where the "aching ignorance" of the young Apollo passes into the Knowledge that "deifies" him through a struggle that is "like the struggle at the gate of death."

In *Why did I laugh?* there is a very sharp contrast between the "aching ignorance" of the opening lines and the accent of complete certainty in the close. We may find, I think, in the references to death a similar, though less salient, difference between the

letters and the poems of Keats. In the former he usually writes of death as an obvious evil, though the passage, already quoted, where he says he would reject a Petrarchal coronation on account of his dying day and because women have cancers, is quite exceptional in its vehement emphasis. This vehemence does not imply a belief that death is merely what it appears, or merely an evil. He had no such belief, any more than he had a constant belief to the contrary. But he does not attempt to "philosophize" on this particular evil, feeling, presumably, that here we are wholly deprived of that experience which enables us to observe and reflect on the good accompanying, and perhaps neutralizing, the obstacles and evils within our life.

In his poetry, on the other hand—though here too he speculates little [1]—his attitude is totally different. In his poetry, it is hardly too much to say, death has become pure good, a friend, almost a Saviour. It delivers from "the weariness, the fever, and the fret." And so his favourite epithet for it is "quiet." In the early sonnet *After dark vapours* death—and that "a Poet's death"—appears, as if it were the acme of a climax, among images of quiet:

> . . . autumn suns
> Smiling at eve upon the quiet sheaves,—

[1] The place taken by death in the symbolism or allegory of *Endymion* is too large a subject for this brief paper. It is treated by de Sélincourt, *English Poets and the National Ideal*, and Bridges, *John Keats, a critical essay*, as well as by Colvin.

Sweet Sappho's cheek—a sleeping infant's breath,—
The gradual sand that through an hour-glass runs,—
A woodland rivulet,—a Poet's death.

We read in *Endymion* (II. 153) :

But this is human life : the war, the deeds,
The disappointment, the anxiety,
Imagination's struggles, far and nigh,
All human ; bearing in themselves this good,
That they are still the air, the subtle food,
To make us feel existence, and to show
How quiet death is.

If we turn to the later, and the supreme, poems, we find the same feeling. The death for which he longs, as he listens to the deathless Nightingale, is "easeful." The Grecian Urn, where the mortal beauty of life is no longer mortal, is the "bride of quietness." And yet here life, in putting on immortality, has lost nothing of its intensity ; it has become "intenser." The "immortal bird" pours forth its soul abroad in ecstacy, and the love which no longer "leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd" is yet "for ever panting and for ever young." Would it be too bold to say that whenever the poet's soul in Keats touches and unites with the absolute and eternal beauty it is "in love with" death ?

FESTE THE JESTER [1]

LEAR'S Fool stands in a place apart—a sacred place ; but, of Shakespeare's other Fools,[2] Feste, the so-called Clown in *Twelfth Night*, has always lain nearest to my heart. He is not, perhaps, more amusing than Touchstone, to whom I bow profoundly in passing ; but I love him more.

Whether Lear's Fool was not slightly touched in his wits is disputable. Though Touchstone is both sane and wise, we sometimes wonder what would happen if he had to shift for himself. Here and

[1] Contributed to *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare*, 1916.

[2] I mean the Fools proper, *i.e.* professional jesters attached to a court or house. In effect they are but four, Touchstone, Feste, Lavache in *All's Well*, and Lear's Fool ; for it is not clear that Trinculo is the court-jester, and the Clown in *Othello*, like the Fool (a brothel-fool) in *Timon*, has but a trivial part. Neither humorists like Launce and Launcelot Gobbo, nor " low " characters, unintentionally humorous, like the old peasant at the end of *Antony and Cleopatra* or the young shepherd called " clown " in *The Winter's Tale*, are Fools proper. The distinction is quite clear, but it tends to be obscured for readers because the wider designation " clown " is applied to persons of either class in the few lists of Dramatis Personæ printed in the Folio, in the complete lists of our modern editions, and also, alike in these editions and in the Folio, in stage-directions and in the headings of speeches. Such directions and headings were meant for the actors, and the principal comic man of the company doubtless played both Launce and Feste. Feste, I may observe, is called " Clown " in the stage-directions and speech-headings, but in the text always " Fool." Lear's Fool is " Fool " even in the former.

there he is ridiculous as well as humorous ; we laugh *at* him, and not only *with* him. We never laugh at Feste. He would not dream of marrying Audrey. Nobody would hint that he was a " natural " or propose to " steal " him (*As You Like It*, I. ii. 52, 57 ; iii. 131). He is as sane as his mistress ; his position considered, he cannot be called even eccentric, scarcely even flighty ; and he possesses not only the ready wit required by his profession, and an intellectual agility greater than it requires, but also an insight into character and into practical situations so swift and sure that he seems to supply, in fuller measure than any of Shakespeare's other Fools, the poet's own comment on the story. He enters, and at once we know that Maria's secret is no secret to him. She warns him that he will be hanged for playing the truant. " Many a good hanging," he replies, " prevents a bad marriage " ; and if Maria wants an instance of a bad marriage, she soon gets it : " Well, go thy way ; if Sir Toby would leave drinking, thou wert as witty a piece of Eve's flesh as any in Illyria." (Gervinus, on the contrary, regarded this marriage as a judgement on Sir Toby ; but then Gervinus, though a most respectable critic, was no Fool.) Maria departs and Olivia enters. Her brother is dead, and she wears the deepest mourning, and has announced her intention of going veiled and weeping her loss every day for seven years. But, in Feste's view, her state of mind would

be rational only if she believed her brother's soul to be in hell; and he does not conceal his opinion. The Duke comes next, and, as his manner ruffles Feste, the mirror of truth is held firmly before him too: "Now, the melancholy god protect thee, and the tailor make thy doublet of changeable taffeta, for thy mind is a very opal." In these encounters we admire the Fool's wisdom the more because it makes no impression on his antagonists, who regard it as mere foolery. And his occasional pregnant sayings and phrases meet the same fate. His assertion that he is the better for his foes and the worse for his friends the Duke takes for a mere absurdity or an inadvertence of expression, though he is tickled by Feste's proof of his affirmation through double negation.[1] The philosopher may speak to Sebastian of "this great lubber the world"; he may tell Viola how "foolery, sir, does walk about the orb like the sun; it shines everywhere"; he may remark to the whole company how "the whirligig of time brings

[1] Feste's statement of his proof (v. i. 25) can hardly be called lucid, and his illustration ("conclusions to be as kisses, if your four negatives make your two affirmatives") seems to have cost the commentators much fruitless labour. If anything definite was in the Fool's mind it may have been this. The gentleman asks for a kiss. The lady, denying it, exclaims "No no no no." But, as the first negative (an adjective) negates the second (a substantive), and the third in like manner the fourth, these four negatives yield two enthusiastic affirmatives, and the gentleman, thanks to the power of logic, gets twice what he asked for. This is not Feste's only gird at the wisdom of the schools. It has been gravely surmised that he was educated for the priesthood and, but for some escapade, would have played Sir Topas in earnest.

in his revenges"; but nobody heeds him. Why should any one heed a man who gets his living by talking nonsense, and who may be whipped if he displeases his employer?

All the agility of wit and fancy, all the penetration and wisdom, which Feste shows in his calling, would not by themselves explain our feeling for him. But his mind to him a kingdom is, and one full of such present joys that he finds contentment there. Outwardly he may be little better than a slave; but Epictetus was a slave outright and yet absolutely free: and so is Feste. That world of quibbles which are pointless to his audience, of incongruities which nobody else can see, of flitting fancies which he only cares to pursue, is his sunny realm. He is alone when he invents that aphorism of Quinapalus and builds his hopes on it; and it was not merely to get sixpence from Sir Andrew that he told of Pigrogromitus and the Vapians passing the equinoctial of Queubus. He had often passed it in that company himself. Maria and Sir Toby (who do enjoy his more obvious jests) are present when, clothed in the curate's gown and beard, he befools the imprisoned Malvolio so gloriously; but the prisoner is his only witness when, for his own sole delight, himself as Sir Topas converses with himself the Fool. But for this inward gaiety he could never have joined with all his heart in the roaring revelry of Sir Toby; but he does not need this revelry, and, unlike Sir Toby and

Sir Toby's surgeon, he remains master of his senses. Having thus a world of his own, and being lord of himself, he cares little for Fortune. His mistress may turn him away; but, "to be turned away, let summer bear it out." This "sunshine of the breast" is always with him and spreads its radiance over the whole scene in which he moves. And so we love him.

We have another reason. The Fool's voice is as melodious as the "sweet content" of his soul. To think of him is to remember "Come away, come away, Death," and "O Mistress mine," and "When that I was," and fragments of folk-song and ballad, and a catch that "makes the welkin dance indeed." To think of *Twelfth Night* is to think of music. It opens with instrumental music, and ends with a song. All Shakespeare's best praise of music, except the famous passage in *The Merchant of Venice*, occurs in it. And almost all the music and the praise of music comes from Feste or has to do with Feste. In this he stands alone among Shakespeare's Fools; and that this, with the influence it has on our feeling for him, was intended by the poet should be plain. It is no accident that, when the Duke pays him for his "pains" in singing, he answers, "No pains, sir; I take pleasure in singing, sir"; that the revelry for which he risks punishment is a revelry of song; that, when he is left alone, he still sings. And, all this being so, I venture to construe in the light of it what

has seemed strange to me in the passage that follows the singing of " Come away." Usually, when Feste receives his " gratillity," he promptly tries to get it doubled ; but here he not only abstains from any such effort but is short, if not disagreeably sharp, with the Duke. The fact is, he is offended, even disgusted ; and offended, not as Fool, but as music-lover and artist. We others know what the Duke said beforehand of the song, but Feste does not know it. Now he sings, and his soul is in the song. Yet, as the last note dies away, the comment he hears from this noble aesthete is, " There's for thy pains " !

I have a last grace to notice in our wise, happy, melodious Fool. He was little injured by his calling. He speaks as he likes ; but from first to last, whether he is revelling or chopping logic or playing with words, and to whomsoever he speaks or sings, he keeps his tongue free from obscenity. The fact is in accord with the spirit of this ever-blessed play, which could not have endured the " foul-mouthed " Fool of *All's Well*, and from which Aldis Wright in his school edition found, I think, but three lines (not the Fool's) to omit. But the trait is none the less characteristic of Feste, and we like him the better for it.

It remains to look at another side of the whole matter. One is scarcely sorry for Touchstone, but one is very sorry for Feste ; and pity, though not a painful pity, heightens our admiration and deepens

our sympathy. The position of the professional jester we must needs feel to be more or less hard, if not of necessity degrading. In Feste's case it is peculiarly hard. He is perfectly sane, and there is nothing to show that he is unfit for independence. In important respects he is, more than Shakespeare's other fools, superior in mind to his superiors in rank. And he has no Celia, no Countess, no Lear, to protect or love him. He had been Fool to Olivia's father, who "took much delight in him"; but Olivia, though not unkind, cannot be said to love him. We find him, on his first appearance, in disgrace and (if Maria is right) in danger of being punished or even turned away. His mistress, entering, tells him that he is a dry fool, that she'll no more of him, and (later) that his fooling grows old and people dislike it. Her displeasure, doubtless, has a cause, and it is transient, but her words are none the less significant. Feste is a relic of the past. The steward, a person highly valued by his lady, is Feste's enemy. Though Maria likes him and, within limits, would stand his friend, there is no tone of affection in her words to him, and certainly none in those of any other person. We cannot but feel very sorry for him.

This peculiar position explains certain traits in Feste himself which might otherwise diminish our sympathy. One is that he himself, though he shows no serious malevolence even to his enemy, shows no affection for any one. His liking for Maria does not

amount to fondness. He enjoys drinking and singing with Sir Toby, but despises his drunkenness and does not care for him. His attitude to strangers is decidedly cool, and he does not appear to be attracted even by Viola. The fact is, he recognizes very clearly that, as this world goes, a man whom nobody loves must look out for himself. Hence (this is the second trait) he is a shameless beggar, much the most so of Shakespeare's Fools. He is fully justified, and he begs so amusingly that we welcome his begging; but shameless it is. But he is laying up treasures on earth against the day when some freak of his own, or some whim in his mistress, will bring his dismissal, and the short summer of his freedom will be followed by the wind and the rain. And so, finally, he is as careful as his love of fun will allow to keep clear of any really dangerous enterprise. He must join in the revel of the knights and the defiance of the steward; but from the moment when Malvolio retires with a threat to Maria, and Maria begins to expound her plot against him, Feste keeps silence; and, though she expressly assigns him a part in the conspiracy, he takes none. The plot succeeds magnificently, and Malvolio is shut up, chained as a lunatic, in a dark room; and that comic genius Maria has a new scheme, which requires the active help of the Fool. But her words, "Nay, I prithee, put on this gown and this beard," show that he objects; and if his hesitation is momentary, it is not

merely because the temptation is strong. For, after all, he runs but little risk, since Malvolio cannot see him, and he is a master in the management of his voice. And so, agreeing with Sir Toby's view that their sport cannot with safety be pursued to the upshot, after a while, when he is left alone with the steward, he takes steps to end it and consents, in his own voice, to provide the lunatic with light, pen, ink, and paper for his letter to Olivia.

We are not offended by Feste's eagerness for sixpences and his avoidance of risks. By helping us to realize the hardness of his lot, they add to our sympathy and make us admire the more the serenity and gaiety of his spirit. And at the close of the play these feelings reach their height. He is left alone; for Lady Belch, no doubt, is by her husband's bedside, and the thin-faced gull Sir Andrew has vanished, and the rich and noble lovers with all their attendants have streamed away to dream of the golden time to come, without a thought of the poor jester. There is no one to hear him sing; but what does that matter? He takes pleasure in singing. And a song comes into his head; an old rude song about the stages of man's life, in each of which the rain rains every day; a song at once cheerful and rueful, stoical and humorous; and this suits his mood and he sings it. But, since he is even more of a philosopher than the author of the song, and since, after all, he is not merely a Fool but the actor who is

playing that part in a theatre, he adds at the end a stanza of his own :

A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain ;
But that's all one, our play is done,
And we'll strive to please you every day.[1]

Shakespeare himself, I feel sure, added that stanza to the old song ; and when he came to write *King Lear* he, I think, wrote yet another, which Feste might well have sung. To the immortal words,

Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee,

the Fool replies,

He that has and a little tiny wit,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
Must make content with his fortunes fit,
Though the rain it raineth every day.

So Shakespeare brings the two Fools together ; and, whether or no he did this wittingly, I am equally grateful to him. But I cannot be grateful to those critics who see in Feste's song only an illustration of the bad custom by which sometimes, when a play was finished, the clown remained, or appeared, on the stage to talk nonsense or to sing some old " trash " ; nor yet to those who tell us that it was " the players " who tacked this particular " trash "

[1] Those who witnessed, some years ago, Mr. Granville Barker's production of *Twelfth Night*, and Mr. Hayden Coffin's presentment of the Fool's part, must always remember them with great pleasure, and not least the singing of this song.

to the end of *Twelfth Night*. They may conceivably be right in perceiving no difference between the first four stanzas and the last, but they cannot possibly be right in failing to perceive how appropriate the song is to the singer, and how in the line

But that's all one, our play is done,

he repeats an expression used a minute before in his last speech.[1] We owe these things, not to the players, but to that player in Shakespeare's company who was also a poet, to Shakespeare himself—the same Shakespeare who perhaps had hummed the old song, half-ruefully and half-cheerfully, to its accordant air, as he walked home alone to his lodging from the theatre or even from some noble's mansion ; he who, looking down from an immeasurable height on the mind of the public and the noble, had yet to be their servant and jester, and to depend upon their favour ; not wholly uncorrupted by this dependence, but yet superior to it and, also, determined, like Feste, to lay by the sixpences it brought him, until at last he could say the words, " Our revels now are ended," [2] and could break—was it a magician's staff or a Fool's bauble ?

[1] " I was one, sir, in this interlude ; one Sir Topas, sir ; *but that's all one.*"

[2] *The Tempest*, IV. i. 148.

SCENE-ENDINGS IN SHAKESPEARE AND IN *THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN*

In this paper, which was not recently composed and has not been revised, " Shakespeare " stands for the plays contained in the " Globe " and similar editions, and all questions as to Shakespeare's sole or partial authorship of any of these plays are ignored. The " Globe," I believe, was used, and I accepted its scene-endings, though sometimes dissenting from them. The additional notes on *The Two Noble Kinsmen* are not confined to the subject of scene-endings.

The 748 scenes in the " Globe " Shakespeare end as follows : Prose, 127 ; Rhyme, 291 ; Blank Verse, 330.

The Blank Verse endings, with which alone we are here concerned, have four forms, the following examples of which are taken from *The Tempest* :

A. A *complete* line, spoken by one person : Act v. Scene i. :

> then to the elements
> Be free, and fare thee well ! Please you, draw near.

B. A *complete* line, spoken by more than one person : iii. iii. :

Gon. And hinder them from what this ecstasy
May now provoke them to.
Adr. Follow, I pray you.

C. A *part*-line closing a speech : III. i. :

For yet at supper-time must I perform
Much business appertaining.

D. A *part*-line consisting of a whole speech : I. ii. :

Pros. Come, follow, speak not for him.

In *The Tempest*, the two complete-line endings number 208 (A 159, and B 49). The two part-line endings number 122 (C 99, and D 23). The percentage of AB is therefore a trifle more than 63 ; that of CD a trifle less than 37.

With these results we may now compare the number of CD endings in the ABCD scene-endings in some plays by other dramatists :

Marlowe (4 plays) - - - -	5 in 58
Jonson (8) - - - - -	5 in 77
Chapman (9) - - - - -	3 in 38
Middleton (3) - - - - -	3 in 15
Webster (3) - - - - -	5 in 10
Beaumont-Fletcher (3) - - -	7 in 22
Fletcher (5) - - - - -	3 in 83
Massinger (6) - - - - -	2 in 42

The texts of some, and perhaps of most, of these dramatists are decidedly inferior to those of our editions of Shakespeare, and I have to query the figures in this record, excepting those for Marlowe, Fletcher, and Massinger. These doubts, however,

hardly affect the main result. The record for the whole is 33 CD endings in 345 ABCD, a percentage of less than 10, as compared with Shakespeare's 36·9. This is approached in the three Beaumont-Fletcher plays, and exceeded in the three by Webster. But the Webster material is very small, the great majority of his scenes ending in rhyme.

We have now to ask whether Shakespeare's free use of the CD scene-endings is equally marked throughout his career of authorship, or, in some degree, specially characteristic of a part of it. His career probably began about the year 1590, and ended in 1612 or 1613; and we may first compare the dramas probably produced up to 1600 (inclusive) with those produced later. Difference of opinion among critics as to two or three of the plays would affect the result very little, and I will adopt Dowden's assignment of dates. According to it, the plays up to 1600 number twenty-one, and those later than 1600 sixteen. In the former I find 20 CD endings, in the latter 102. This, so far, answers our question plainly and emphatically enough.[1]

[1] The plays to 1600 are: Ten Comedies, containing five CD endings; nine Histories, with nine CD endings; two Tragedies, with seven CD endings. The plays after 1600 are: four Comedies, with thirteen CD endings; one History, with six; eleven Tragedies, with eighty-three. It will be seen that in Shakespeare's whole career the Tragedies are responsible for the bulk of the CD endings. He has no Tragedy without one, while six Comedies and three Histories have none. (It should be remembered that not all of the plays classed as Tragedies in the Folio division are tragedies in the full sense of the word.)

Finally, of the plays later than 1600 we may take those assigned by Dowden and other critics to the years from 1606 to the end, omitting, however, *Henry VIII.*, *Timon*, and *Pericles*, as probably not entirely by Shakespeare. The following list gives the number of CD endings in the total of ABCD endings :

Macbeth - - - - - -	10 in 16
Antony and Cleopatra - - -	23 in 37
Coriolanus - - - - -	16 in 24
Cymbeline - - - - -	5 in 14
The Tempest - - - - -	3 in 5
The Winter's Tale - - - -	5 in 8

This gives a total of 62 CD in 104 ABCD, and a percentage of 59·6 for the CD endings, as compared with the 36·9 for the whole, showing that Shakespeare was increasingly addicted to these endings as time went on.

With this result we may look, finally, at the two plays which, if Shakespeare was concerned in them, probably contain his latest work.

Since Spedding dealt with *Henry the Eighth* the majority of critics attribute this play to Shakespeare and Fletcher. Of the five scenes assigned to Shakespeare two end with C ; and in Act III. Scene ii. the first part (to line 203), which is attributed to him, also ends with C.

The Two Noble Kinsmen was first published in 1634 " as written by " Fletcher and Shakespeare,

and was included in the second Folio of Fletcher's works, but not in the early Folios of Shakespeare's. It contains twenty-four scenes. Twelve of these are, by almost all critics, assigned to Fletcher; and of the twelve one, perhaps, ends with C. Of the remaining twelve nine have blank-verse endings; and, of these, seven perhaps, and certainly six, end with C. The percentage of C, therefore, is roughly 77 or 66. Either of these percentages, it will be noticed, is even higher than that for the latest accepted plays of Shakespeare (59·6), and it would not be surprising in scenes written later still.

It would, on the other hand, be extremely surprising in scenes written by Massinger, to whom the non-Fletcher part of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* has been attributed. We have seen that six plays by Massinger yield only two CD endings; and I may add that in the whole of the remaining plays, and parts of plays, attributed to him I found, at most, only four more.

As I can hardly hope to write anything again on Shakespeare, I may perhaps be allowed to say, without discussion, that I cannot for a moment doubt the presence of his hand in most of the scenes not obviously Fletcher's, though it does not appear to me improbable that Fletcher revised these scenes.

Finally, in regard to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, I will add some notes on the vocabulary of the scenes

which, by practically general consent, are not by Fletcher.

It will be found that in these scenes [1] there occur words, or uses of words, which appear, either solely or chiefly, in the last of Shakespeare's undoubted plays, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. The following are some examples, taken, for the most part, from *The Tempest*.

TNK, v. iii. 77, "This *burst* of clamour." This substantive occurs in *T*, II. i. 311; *WT*, III. i. 8; *Cym.*, IV. ii. 106 (elsewhere only in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*).

TNK, v. i. 113, "*convulsions*." This word occurs elsewhere only in *T*, IV. i. 260. In *TNK* it is followed in the next line by "aged cramps," which words occur also close to the "convulsions" of *T*.

TNK, III. ii. 29, "*dissolve*," v. intr. = "fade away, so fall to nothing" (Schmidt), not, as usual, "be *melted* away." The word is used thus only in *T*, IV. i. 154 (and v. i. 64).

TNK, II. i. 11, *estate*, v. tr., occurs in *T*, IV. i. 85 (and only in two other plays).

TNK, v. i. 63, *flow*, as = high tide, opp. *ebb*, occurs, in the same sense, in *T*, v. i. 270 (and, figuratively, in three other plays).

TNK, v. i. 53, *foison*, occurs in *T*, II. i. 163, and IV. i. 110 (and in three other plays).

TNK, I. iii. 75, *humm'd*, v. tr. *T*, III. ii. 147, has *hum* as v. intr. (elsewhere only in *Pericles*); and at II. i. 317 occurs *humming*, as subst.

TNK, III. ii. 14, *jingling*, elsewhere only in *T*, v. i. 233, the reference in both cases to chains.

[1] I have unwarily included in them III. ii., which I take to be mainly Shakespearian, but which is not so taken by most of the critics.

TNK, III. ii. 25, *moped*. The word occurs (as v. intr.) only in *T*, v. i. 240, *Hamlet*, and *Henry V*.

TNK, I. i. 161, I. ii. 2, III. i. 19, v. iii. 70, *prime* (first in time or excellence) occurs in *T*, I. ii. 72 and 425 (and in *Richard III.*, *Pericles*, and (thrice) *Henry VIII.*).

TNK, I. i. 55, 188, *transported*, as = ravished, beside one's self, occurs in *T*, I. ii. 76, *Winter's Tale*, III. ii. 159 and v. iii. 69 (and in *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus*).

TNK, v. iii. 106, *unsettled*, as = perturbed, occurs in *T*, v. i. 59, and *Winter's Tale*, I. ii. 147, 325, *Henry VIII.*, *King Lear*, and *King John*.

It may be observed as curious that the words *jingling* and *mope* occur close together both in *TNK* and *T*; and so also *dissolve* and *unsettle*.

INSPIRATION [1]

THE idea of inspiration—of a peculiar influence on certain persons, issuing in speech or in writing of which they would otherwise be incapable—appears in many religions, and must perhaps occur in any developed religion. It is not this idea in its specifically religious shape, and still less any controversies respecting its validity, that I propose to consider, but something more general and nearer to our own experience. When we speak of the inspiration of the poet, or distinguish certain passages in poetry by calling them inspired, we do not commit ourselves to a belief in any "supernatural" origin of the inspiration, but we do undoubtedly mean to signalize a fact; and this fact is the presence of something which separates the inspired poet from the ordinary writer of talent, or the inspired passage from the mass of the poet's work. Inspiration in this wider sense is ascribed not only to the poet, but, for example, to other artists, and to the originators of great moral or political ideas, perhaps of great scientific or philosophical ideas. In a sense still wider, men speak of inspiration coming into their own lives

[1] An address read in a Glasgow Church.

or fading out of them; they remember moments when a new light or a reviving force appeared to stream upon them, coming whence it would, from the presence or the thoughts of the living or the dead, from intercourse with nature, from the heights of personal joy or the obscure deeps of pain; and they think of these moments as inspired. It is of this that I propose to speak, of the inspiration of the man of genius, and what may be called the inspiration of daily life. What is the nature of this phenomenon, and what is its value? If we can discover something of its nature, we shall have discovered also something of the nature of inspiration in the religious sense. Since the latter is called inspiration, what is true of inspiration in general should be true of it, though what is stated of it in particular need not be stated also of inspiration in general.

The main fact indicated by the word inspiration seems to be the unexpected appearance in the mind of something strikingly different from its general contents and habitual course. This contrast between what is usual and expected on the one side, and something of a different nature on the other side, may be found in all cases where we use the word. In literary works, for example, it is a marked change, the sudden rising of ideas and their expression above the customary level even of the mind of genius, and much more above the customary level of minds less

gifted, that arrests us, evokes wonder, delight, sometimes even awe, and perhaps suggests the feeling, expressed by the word " inspiration " (in-breathing), that *up* to this point the man himself was at work, but that *at* this point he has become the channel of another power. And, in like manner, when we say that a poem with all its merits lacks inspiration, or complain that our lives are uninspired, it is because we miss the sense of something breaking in with incalculable effect upon the familiar tenour of our thoughts or the easily understood movements of the poet's mind.

If we examine more narrowly this peculiar salience of the inspired idea (I use the word " idea " for the sake of brevity to signify whatever produces the impression in question), we may find in this idea three marks or notes which are always in some degree present. Two of these concern the matter of the inspiration—that which is communicated, and the other concerns the mode of its communication.

The matter is, in the first place, something new. The man of genius in his inspired mood is not repeating or varying a theme already announced and treated by himself or another. An idea or effect hitherto unknown, and startling in its strangeness, has come through him into being ; and this is why we speak of the product as " original," the bursting forth of a fresh force ; or as a " creation," the making of something not before existent ; or at the least as

a *new* discovery or invention. Newness like this, no doubt, seldom belongs to the inspirations of daily life ; as a rule the matter here is new only to the subject of the inspiration ; but to him it is emphatically new, the revelation of some truth or beauty which he had not yet recognized, the illumination of some region hitherto dim to his eyes ; or if it be not this—and when he gathers inspiration from the repetition of well-known poetry or music, it cannot be this—yet it is to him the welling forth of a new energy within, the source of that freshness which he contrasts with the too familiar monotony of his mental life.

If the matter of inspiration were merely new, it might quickly lose its power. But, in the second place, it is contrasted with the habitual course of the mind as something superior to this course—so greatly superior that it appears to be actually different in kind. Its illuminating power if it appeals to our desire for truth, its attracting or compelling power if it answers to our longing for goodness, its sublimity or loveliness if it speaks to our sense of beauty, are quite unlike the steady influences normally exerted by the beliefs, motives, and objects which control us. In the moment of its strength we are tempted to say that it alone is true and good, and that all the rest is illusion or weariness ; and after it has died away and the weight of custom once more returns upon us, we are tempted perhaps to reverse our judgment,

and to pronounce our customary life the reality, and our inspiration a dream, so deep is the division between them.

Not less unusual, to come to the third mark of inspiration, is the manner of its appearance. However new and superior an idea may be, we should never call it inspired if it seemed to us to have been produced by the mere laborious exercise of customary powers, however great. The poetic or musical result whose origin and growth we can approximately understand, the truth which is exhibited as the final link in a chain of reasoning, do not strike us as inspired. It is when the thought or phrase or melody is to us quite inexplicable in origin, however simple when once it has come ; when it seems, as we say, not to have been made but to have " come," to have " flashed," or " dawned," or " stolen," upon the mind of genius ; then it is that we feel the presence of something more and other than what we call the artist or philosopher himself. And in their degree the inspirations of daily life have the same characteristic. They cannot be produced by mere exertion ; and we refer them not to ourselves, but to the poet, the musician, the philosopher whose mind has lifted ours to his ; to nature, on whose face we have been gazing ; or perhaps, in an hour of after meditation, to a spirit less bounded than any of these, but present in all these, and passing through them to us.

Such in outline appears to be the nature of inspiration, if we consider it simply as a fact of experience, and abstain from asking those further questions which would certainly have to be faced before we could suppose ourselves to have arrived at its whole significance. Yet even this limited account of it would be incomplete if we did not observe another indubitable fact about its communication. This fact wears that semblance of paradox which often frightens common sense and points to deep truths. We speak of the inspired idea as given to a man, and we thus separate it from the man himself, as though it did not belong to him. Yet when we think of Shakespeare or Beethoven, we surely do not think of them *without* their greatest works or passages, as though they were most themselves when least inspired. We should rather say that Shakespeare was most himself when most inspired, or even that the true Shakespeare was not the man who bought property in Stratford, but the author of *Hamlet*, the inspired poet. And again, if we ascribe the inspiration of daily life not to ourself but to some other source ; if we say that in it we forget our little selves ; we still describe its visitation as *our* best moment, *we* are intensely active while it lasts, our *self* finds in it that satisfaction for which we crave, and when we remember it we feel that in it we were at last our true self, that which we were born to be. If then we wish to describe accurately what we call inspira-

tion, we must not ignore either of these two aspects of the fact. It is something which we cannot attribute to ourself, it is given to us, and in it we lose ourself; that is the one aspect. It is something in which we find ourself, and are at last our true self; that is the other aspect. Who that hears such words as these can fail to recognize them, can fail to be reminded of that which we call religion?

The resemblance is imperfect; yet the point of view from which I would now venture to regard inspiration may rightly be called religious. It is a point of view made familiar to us through the influence of several famous writers of the last century and a half. Under various forms they have held the idea that everything, and much more than everything, which we call inspiration—not only that which is named in the specific sense religion—is a divine manifestation, the manifestation of a spiritual being, at once the source and the perfection of nature and humanity; that an energy in this sense divine operates in the noble creations of what we call the human mind; that thus the thinker, the artist, the reformer, though he may not use, and may even avoid or quarrel with, the language of religion, may still be a divine messenger; and that throughout the whole field of nature and human life at countless points there shines for open eyes a radiance breaking through the outward show of things and coming from one central source of light. By those who accept in

one form or another this idea, inspiration will be regarded as one mode of such manifestation.

As I have said, this idea has become familiar, and I shall not attempt to enforce it, and still less to indicate the grounds on which it rests. But it is open to most serious misapprehensions. Those who hold it are accused, for example, of denying the distinction of better and worse, and of considering all things in the world as being, in equal degree and in one and the same sense, revelations of divinity—and this would be what is properly called pantheism. But the charge, at least as directed against the greater writers, has no warrant. If, in their view, even a flower or even a stone contains, and may therefore tell us, something of the divine perfection, it does not follow that it contains a hundredth part as much as does the love of a bird for its young; if the poet's song is in its way and degree divine, that does not raise it to the divineness of the martyr's death. Nothing finite can adequately express the infinite, but finite things differ immensely in the degrees of their approach to this adequate expression. And they differ also in kind. That which speaks primarily to the understanding, as any truth does, or to the emotional imagination, as art does, is a manifestation differing in kind from that which appeals primarily to the will, as does a moral or religious ideal. And so when the inspiration of the poet is regarded from a religious point of view, this

need not mean that it is regarded as the highest or fullest manifestation of that which is divine ; though it does mean that it is viewed as a manifestation higher and fuller than something else which lies below it,—in this instance, the uninspired or less inspired thoughts of the poet.

In a similar way those who hold this view would meet an objection from another side. They may be told that they are making too grave a matter of what is really no more than a curious mental phenomenon ; that poetic inspiration (to take that instance) is in fact no more than an unusual exertion of power on the part of the poet himself ; and that they cherish an illusion when they imply that a divine idea interrupts and supersedes the regular action of the human mind. They will answer that they cherish no such illusion, for they do not accept this exclusive opposition of human and divine. To them the regular action of poetic genius is itself a divine manifestation, though one less full than that which appears in the inspired moment, and the higher manifestation rises not upon the ruins but upon the basis of the lower ; the one being in reality just as " regular " as the other, though we are able to discern something of the rules or laws of the lower, and almost nothing of the rules or laws of the higher. And in like manner, when they are told that the inspiration belongs really to the poet himself, before they can accept or reject that statement they must

ask what meaning is attached to the phrase "the poet himself." For if this means the poet regarded as severed from divinity, then they would reply that nothing whatever that is truly poetic belongs to the poet himself; and if the phrase means the poet regarded, and truly regarded, as in union with divinity, then they would at once admit that his very highest inspiration belongs to the poet himself. For them the contrast between his uninspired and his inspired activity is really a contrast between a less inspired and a more inspired, a less full and a more full manifestation, just as in daily life the contrast between the steady effort after goodness and the occasional moral or religious inspiration is not a contrast between something merely human and something divine, but the difference between two modes of action of one human-divine will. It follows, doubtless, that in their view the popular account of inspiration, as the coming of a spirit not that of the man himself, is ambiguous and so far open to objection; but they will hold that the true objection to it is not that it is more than just to the moment of inspiration, but that it is less than just to those more usual activities with which inspiration is contrasted. And, at the same time, they will maintain that the contrast between these two is so marked and even so startling that there is no substantial untruth in a phraseology which distinguishes one from the other by the name inspiration.

So far I have been attempting to suggest how inspiration may be regarded in a religious light, and how the idea of a divine manifestation in the so-called secular sphere may have a real meaning. But now I would go a step further. The inspiration which we are considering is not only capable of being regarded in a religious light, it is also capable of being itself religious. These are two different things. When we regard the inspired idea of the poet as a mode of divine manifestation, we certainly regard it in a religious light ; but the inspiration is not itself religious unless the poet *himself* regards it in this light ; not religious, for example, if he considers the idea as his own product. Any inspiration, that is, becomes religious when the recipient of it regards it *as* inspiration, is conscious of himself as receiving it, and is moved by feelings of gratitude or devotion towards its source. Nor is this a rare occurrence. That it is not rare, though it might be much more frequent, in regard to some of the inspirations of daily life, is certain. And although we know but little of the inner life of great men of genius, the modesty or humility which is so often conspicuous in them would lead us to believe that frequently it is not otherwise with them. The Greek sculptor who wrought his statue, and, when it was finished, fell on his knees before it, felt that its beauty was no mere creation of his own, but something heavenly. Milton's passionate prayer to the

celestial muse was not a poetic convention. And to Wordsworth what in literary phrase is named the consciousness of genius was in truth the consciousness of dependence upon, union with, and devotion to, the spirit of thought and love which manifests itself in nature and is more fully revealed in the thought and love of humanity. The man who is conscious of genius is generally a little man of talent. Men of genius are more often intensely conscious of their own littleness, and of the immeasurable heights above them. Here again we find the paradox of inspiration—that the greater the spiritual activity within a man, the less is he able to ascribe this activity to himself. And this fact, however paradoxical, is the root of religion.

In passing to the second and plainer part of our subject, the value of inspiration, I shall not always speak of the subject in its religious light ; for it is not necessary to our purpose to do so, just as in daily life it is not desirable or wholesome constantly to thrust into prominence what we may nevertheless regard as the most important aspect of a thing. If we glance first at the value of the inspirations of genius, we are considering in reality the general question of the value of men of genius to the world ; for the mass of their good work is but the realization of the insight of their best hours. There is a tendency at the present time to speak as though the

man of genius were of no great moment to mankind, a tendency due partly to revolt against some exaggeration in Carlyle's doctrine of heroes and hero-worship, partly to the predominance of the idea of evolution, which appears at first to diminish the importance of individuals. This tendency seems to me to run counter to facts and to be mischievous in its effect. It is perfectly true that the great man in whatsoever sphere is not a thing independent and apart ; that generally (for we may pass by the cases where he appears to be immensely in advance of his time) he concentrates, intensifies, brings to clear consciousness, and realizes more fully, feelings and ideas which are active all around him and constitute what we call the spirit of the time ; or that, as I should prefer to say, he is generally but one, and that the clearest and most powerful, expression of a spirit which also manifests itself in the lesser minds of his age. This is true, and doubtless Carlyle omitted to lay sufficient stress upon the fact, and upon the contribution to progress made by less striking individuals and by popular movements. But this truth diminishes scarcely at all the supreme importance of the man of genius. Strike him out in imagination; deprive those feelings and ideas of the general mind of that heightening and that utterance which they gain in him ; consider in addition that these very feelings and ideas are mainly an inheritance from preceding men of genius ; and then ask what the

world would be without its great men. In truth the man of genius (or rather the spirit which expresses itself in him under the limitations which belong to his individuality and diminish his greatness) is the main factor in human progress. Be his sphere that of religion, or science, or art, or of practice in morals or politics or even industry, he comes, and something as yet unrevealed breaks into the light. That which he brings, the new insight, begins its work upon the world, often, alas, in pain and conflict, struggling through clouds, and losing, as it conquers them and brightens on the general mind, much of the ineffable purity and radiance of its dawn. But even so it does its work. Like a stream from a mountain spring his idea divides and spreads. Slowly it distributes itself along the hundred channels of minds less original, and then along the thousand channels of minds less original still, till it has irrigated and fertilized a country or a continent, meeting again and again with like streams of influence from other springs, mixing with them and acquiring from its union a new virtue and a continued life. We *are* in our spiritual substance the spirits of the great dead. Let any one of us attempt to banish from his own mental being all that emanates ultimately from their inspiration, and he will find left within himself scarcely anything that he would not wish away.[1]

[1] The reader will remember that I am not professing to discuss the whole subject. I do not deny that great men, *e.g.* great con-

On the value of the inspiration of daily life it is needless to insist. Its sources are many and various. Only a few are mentioned when we name the works of great writers in verse and prose; works of art in painting, sculpture, architecture, music; the eloquence of the preacher and the orator; intercourse with nature; great institutions; the influence of noble or beautiful characters, friends of to-day or heroes of the past; the passion of humanity or patriotism or any worthy cause; our deeper joys and sorrows; the appeal that all things make to us that are weaker or less fortunate than ourselves. But not all of the springs of inspiration flow for all; and in addressing lastly to you—and to myself—a few words on the obstacles which shut us off from inspiration, I would first emphasize not only the variety of its sources but the variety of human nature. We cannot deny the fact that what brings inspiration to one man may bring to another only weariness or superficial pleasure. And we should gain much if we recognized this fact more clearly, if we remembered that the central spiritual force reaches men's souls in the most diverse forms, and that what is best for one of us is not therefore best for another. The main thing here is to know one's self, and neither to be untrue to it nor to seek to impose it on our

querors, have sometimes done a frightful amount of harm. Almost all great forces, even religion, have sometimes done so. But I cannot think that this is the more important aspect of the subject or that which needs emphasizing.

neighbour. It is easy, if we honestly examine ourselves, to recognize what really brings inspiration, a quickening or deepening of life, a sense of the infinite, a harmony with what is felt to be highest ; easy to distinguish this from trivial emotions or pleasant amusements. What is it then to me if that which to me is inspiration is to another blankness or frivolity, or if he bids me seek a renewal of life where *he* can find it and *I* cannot ? Let me know where I find it and there seek it ; for if it were life to no other soul upon earth, to me it is life. And in return let me abstain from the presumption of supposing that, because there is no inspiration for me in the source where he finds life, there is therefore none for him. In this matter we do but deceive ourselves with words. Because there is a word " poetry," a word " music," a word " nature," we think that poetry, or music, or nature, is one and the same for all. But in fact these are names of different *experiences* ; and if I can find no inspiration in nature where another finds much, the reason is simply that the experience which I call intercourse with nature is a miserably different thing from the experience which he calls by the same name.

There is another form of hindrance. I said that it is easy to recognize inspiration ; yet the fact remains that even at the sources whence we really draw it we sometimes fail to recognize it. Misapprehension of our own experience, timidity, prejudice,

contracted views, lead us to regard as a mere pastime what is or might be spiritual life, and we sacrifice this life, not always to more pressing duties, but often to quite inferior claims. Nothing, perhaps, has in this respect more to answer for than the misuse of the antithesis of things secular and things spiritual, a misuse which casts the stigma of unspirituality on many of the truest stirrings of the spirit, starving the very souls of its victims, or driving them to an indignant rejection of the creed in whose name they have been misled. There is nothing secular on the earth but the secular mind of man; nothing so spiritual that this mind cannot materialize it, nothing again in which men's spiritual mind cannot find food, though there are many things which at first resist his effort, many which yield in the end but a scanty store, and many again which pour the food of his soul out freely before him. And among these last are assuredly those powers of inspiration in which, because they are named secular, he is apt to seek, and therefore apt to find, not inspiration, but a mere play of his senses or an alleviation of his tedium.

But it is not only misapprehension and prejudice that debar us from the springs of inspiration; it is quite as much the spiritual sloth which besets not least the well-meaning and respectable life. It is true that inspiration cannot be gained by mere effort, but it is equally true that without effort it cannot be gained. The idea may flash upon the mind of

genius, but it was prepared for by long and arduous labour ; and the inspirations of daily life are no more given to the sluggard than the joy of religion to the soul that is content without it. Nor is this spiritual sloth mere indolence alone. It is only too possible to be at once desperately busy and spiritually slothful. For to most men of our energetic and often dutiful race it is not hard to exert strenuously what may be called the ordinary powers of the mind : but to call into vigorous action the higher powers which provoke inspiration, to imagine intensely like a poet, to think persistently like a philosopher, to hear with the great composer's ear and feel with his soul, to love nature—really to love it, to bear the stress of pity for man's misery and failure instead of thrusting it out of sight, to face the aspirations to which we have been untrue and never shall be true, to endure the society of the dead or the living whose superiority rebukes our littleness—this is not easy. And so, though we know where inspiration lies, we flinch from seeking it, and come to live without it, and offer perhaps to our soul the sacrifice of unremitting labour ; which it accepts, but still, if we would hear it, accuses us of a spiritual sloth beneath the burden of which it walks with heavy steps and joyless eyes.

Some who hear me will think that an exaggerated importance has been attached to the exceptional moments of inspiration ; and, if this is so, they will

easily supply the corrective to any such one-sidedness. But there are others who may feel that almost all that has been said, even if true, is little better than mockery for them, because such inspiration as they knew seems to have faded from their lives, and is sought in vain at the sources whence it used to flow. And it is to them that I would venture to offer a final thought. To deny that such unhappiness exists would be insincere, and it is no sufficient consolation to be reminded of the value of that plain habitual effort to do well for which no inspiration is a substitute, and without which the inspirations even of genius can hardly persist. But in reality we have seldom a right to content ourselves even with this effort ; and we do wrong, when, because inspiration seems to fail us, we turn from seeking it at its old sources. In most cases where the desire for it still lives in men, the inspiration whose absence they deplore is not really absent. It is present in an imperfect but still an operative form. It comes to them with little of the joy that once announced it, but yet it comes ; and that it does so may be proved to them by a surer test than their feelings, the test of its action in their lives. They *are*, in the end, not what they feel but what they enact. Their personality is not their happy or wretched consciousness of themselves, but what goes out from them, their operation on the world. If power still flows from the old source ; if, after their recourse to it, a fuller

energy passes into their daily duty and touches the lives around them ; they fail both in insight and in faith when they dream that they are deserted. Here too, as everywhere, inspiration has its analogy in religion, of which indeed it should be but one form. For religion—the union of the soul with the spirit that it worships—is one thing, and the joy and sweetness of it is another ; and in the soul that seeks it this spirit may still be present, and attest its presence, not in the rapture of emotion but in the transformed mind and the devoted will.

MONOSYLLABIC LINES AND WORDS IN ENGLISH VERSE AND PROSE

THE origin of this paper was as follows. One day, when I had no book by me, I was amusing myself by recalling passages in Shakespeare; and one of these was Hamlet's farewell to Horatio:

> If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent thee from felicity awhile,
> And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
> To tell my story.

I was struck by the difference between the second and the third of these lines; one of them having five words, and the other ten, while the former has two "Latin" words, and the latter none.[1] And then I noticed that all the words of the latter are of one syllable.

Thereupon I amused myself by recalling such monosyllabic lines in other plays; and when I had a Shakespeare by me I found invariably a considerable number of them, and in some plays as many as two hundred. An examination of dramas by writers

[1] The word 'pain' comes *ultimately* from Latin.

contemporary with Shakespeare, and later, gave, in various degrees, the same result.

Meanwhile, however, I naturally asked myself whether such lines occur in non-English dramas, and, if so, to what extent. The Greek, Latin, and Italian plays examined showed none. Some by Corneille, Racine, and Molière yielded but a few (never more, I think, than ten); and this could not be fully explained by the fact that the lines here have six accents, while those counted in the English plays are of five. But in German dramas of five-accent lines the case is altered. In Goethe's *Tasso* I counted thirty-six ; in Schiller's *Don Carlos* twenty-one ; and in Lessing's *Nathan* almost seventy (but the percentage is only about two).

The main conclusion to be drawn from the examination of plays was that English drama is markedly peculiar in the prevalence of monosyllabic lines.

Turning next to non-dramatic verse, and confining my study to English, I made a record of such lines in poems of five-accent lines, from Shakespeare to Bridges. Then I made a special study of Shakespeare's plays; and, finally, I dealt with prose. First, I compared short passages by foreign authors with English translations of them, my object here being two-fold : (1) to find the proportions of monosyllabic words and of other words in the foreign original and in the translation ; (2) to find in each the *number* of

words, monosyllabic and other, this number proving to be much the higher in the English translation. Afterwards, I compared English authors with one another as regards the prevalence of monosyllabic words.

POEMS

The following list, referred to in this paper as the *Main List*, shows the percentage of monosyllabic lines in poems (or parts of poems) of lines of five accents. When a poem contains lines of more, or less, than five accents, these lines are ignored.

		Total lines.	Mono. lines.	Percentage.
SHAKESPEARE	*Venus and Adonis*, stanzas 1-50	300	30	10
	Sonnets, 1-50	700	63	9
SPENSER	*Fairy Queen*, I. v. stanzas 1-23	184	6	3·2
	Astrophel	216	14	6·4
MILTON	*Paradise Lost*, I. ll. 1-270	270	11	4·07
	Lycidas	178	6	3·3
DRYDEN	*Absalom and Achitophel*, ll. 1-229	229	6	2·6
	Macflecknoe	217	8	3·6
POPE	*Essay on Man*, I.	294	10	3·4
	Epistle to Arbuthnot, ll. 1-214	214	19	8·8
GRAY	*Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*	128	3	2·3
COWPER	*Receipt of my Mother's Picture*	121	9	7·4
CRABBE	*The Frank Courtship*, ll. 1-210	210	5	2·3
WORDSWORTH	*Tintern Abbey*	160	7	4·3
	Michael, ll. 1-159	159	10	6·2
COLERIDGE	*Destiny of Nations*, ll. 1-269	269	7	2·5
	Lines on an Autumnal Evening	106	2	1·8
SCOTT	*Harold the Dauntless*, VI. i.-vi.	108	5	4·5

		Total lines.	Mono. lines.	Percentage.
Byron	*Corsair*, ll. 1-192 - -	192	11	5·7
	Vision of Judgment, I.-XX. -	160	15	9·3
Shelley	*Epipsychidion*, ll. 1-146 -	146	11	7·5
	Triumph of Life, ll. 1-258 -	258	16	6·2
Keats	*Isabella*, ll. 1-120 - -	120	8	6·6
	Hyperion, ll. 1-134 - -	134	6	4·4
Tennyson	*Passing of Arthur*, ll. 1-153	153	24	15
	Gardener's Daughter, ll. 1-140 - - -	140	16	11·4
Browning	*Pauline*, ll. 1-140 - -	140	28	20
	Ring and Book : The Pope, ll. 1-197 - - -	197	10	5·07
Arnold	*Sohrab and Rustum*, ll. 1-153 - - -	153	22	14·3
	Thyrsis - - - -	216	16	7·4
Swinburne	*Laus Veneris*, ll. 1-120 -	120	28	23·3
	Tiresias, ll. 1-120 - -	120	18	15
Morris	*The man who never laughed again*, ll. 1-140 - -	140	23	16·4
	Defence of Guenevere, ll. 1-129 - - -	129	19	14·7
Bridges	*Eros and Psyche*, August -	217	26	11·9
	Growth of Love, Sonnets 1-9	126	16	12·6

Notes on the Main List

It may naturally be objected to this list that, owing to the shortness of the passages used, one cannot be sure that they represent fairly the practice of the authors. This is true ; but I may say that at first I used much longer passages, and that the percentage results were almost identical with those of the present record.

The reader, again, may ask why the list begins with Spenser and Shakespeare, and not with Chaucer.

The main reason is that, for the purpose of the list, the poets from Spenser and Shakespeare onwards are fairly on a level, since almost any word which is monosyllabic in these poets is so in Pope or Tennyson. But a host of words which are always monosyllabic in these poets are not so in Chaucer. For instance, there are three such words in a single line of the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* :

The tendre croppes and the yonge sonne.[1]

It may be asked, lastly, why the record ignores the long interval between Chaucer and Spenser. The reason is that I wished the Main List to be short, and to deal only with authors with whom the reader would certainly be familiar. This could hardly be said even of the leading Scottish poets of this interval ; but some of these poets, with others of less note, are recorded in an Additional List.

I will now add some notes on the Main List, beginning with two salient points, before coming to particular authors. (1) It will be seen that the Shakespeare percentages are not reached or nearly approached again till we come to Byron. As to this I can only suggest, as possible, that Shakespeare's vocabulary was less influenced by literary study, especially of Latin poetry, than that of the later poets, and that it was also influenced by the dramas of his predecessors and by his own concern with the

[1] In four long passages in various poems by Chaucer I found the following percentages : 1·5, 1·3, 1·06, 2·7.

theatre; for the dialogue of persons in a play usually yields a larger number of monosyllabic lines than does the narrative of a poet. (2) Perhaps the most salient fact in the list is the very marked superiority of the percentages beginning with Tennyson and Browning to those of the poets immediately preceding them. I cannot suggest any explanation of this fact.

The following are notes on the records for some of the authors. Milton: *Paradise Regained* has the percentage 4·1; *Comus*, 2·9; the Sonnets, 7·5. Dryden: the percentages in everything examined are low. Pope: *Rape of the Lock*, about 3, but *Eloisa to Abelard*, 7·6. Crabbe: in all tales examined less than 3. Wordsworth: the percentages in the *Prelude* and *Excursion*, so far as examined, are much lower than those in the list. Coleridge: the percentages in all poems examined are low. Byron: in *Cain*, Act I., the percentage about 12. Shelley: in *The Cenci*, Act V., almost 10. Keats: *Isabella*, the *whole* poem, 3·3; *Lamia*, 5·3. Tennyson: *Dora*, about 21. Browning: *A death in the desert*, 13·3; *Lippo Lippi*, 17·3.

The following list shows the percentage of monosyllabic lines in passages by some poets not included in the Main List:

Lyndsay	*Testament of the Papyngo*, 150-345	2·5
Dunbar	*Merle and Nichtingale* - - -	5·8
Marlowe	*Hero and Leander*, Sestiad I. -	3·9
Drayton	*Legend of Matilda*, 1-175 - -	4·6

JONSON	*Elegy on Lady V. Digby* - -	10·1
DONNE	*Elegies*, I.-IV. - - - -	12·2
SOUTHEY	*Joan of Arc*, Book IX. - - -	3
BROWNING, E. B.	*Aurora Leigh*, 1-214 - - -	4·2
ROSSETTI, D. G.	*A Last Confession*, 1-141 - -	19·8
MEREDITH, G.	*Modern Love*, I.-X. - - -	11·2
SWINBURNE	*Ave atque Vale* - - - -	13·4

The following are examples of very low percentages (alexandrines ignored) :

AKENSIDE	*Pleasures of Imagination*, Book I. -	1·1
COWPER	*The Task*, Book I. - - - -	1·5
THOMSON	*The Seasons*, Spring - - -	0·8
	Autumn - - -	0·5
JOHNSON	*Vanity of Human Wishes* - -	1·3
GOLDSMITH	*Traveller* - - - - -	1·5
BURNS	*Cotter's Saturday Night* - - -	1·1
SCOTT	*Vision of Don Roderick* - - -	1·7
LANDOR	*Gebir*, Books III.-V. - - -	0·8
CAMPBELL	*Pleasures of Hope*, Part I. - -	1·7
COLERIDGE	*Religious Musings* - - - -	1·4

NOTE ON NARRATIVE POEMS

In a drama the dramatist makes the persons or characters speak, but does not himself speak. In a narrative poem the poet himself may be said to be speaking when he describes scenes or persons, or narrates events or actions. But, in addition, he may make the persons or characters speak. In that case, it will be found, the percentage of monosyllabic lines is almost always (perhaps always) higher in these speeches than in the passages where the poet is speaking.

The following are some examples:

		Narrative.	Speeches.
SHAKESPEARE	*Venus and Adonis*, 1-300 -	6·7	14·4
SPENSER	*Fairy Queen*, III. ii. - -	3	6·6
MILTON	*Paradise Lost*, I. - - -	1·8	5
POPE	*Rape of the Lock* - - -	2·8	3·4
WORDSWORTH	*Hartleap Well* - - -	4	8·4
BYRON	*Vision of Judgment* - -	5·9	11
SHELLEY	*Revolt of Islam*, XI. - -	4	12·5
KEATS	*Isabella* - - - -	2	11·4
TENNYSON	*Morte d'Arthur*, 1-272 - -	6·6	13·1
MORRIS	*Man who never laughed again*	5·7	25·7
BRIDGES	*Eros and Psyche*, June -	5·3	14·1

SHAKESPEARE

In these records, to economize space, I have referred to the plays by the capital letters of their titles; *e.g.* "*T*" for *The Tempest.*

The following are examples of monosyllabic lines. The plays used are in the order of the Folio and of most of the current editions:

T. This is as strange a maze as e'er men trod.
MM. Ay, but to die, and go we know not where.
MND. Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind.
MV. In sooth, I know not why I am so sad.
AY. As I do live by food, I met a fool.
AW. It is not so with Him that all things knows
As 'tis with us that square our guess by shows.
TN. Oh, it came o'er my ear like the sweet south.
WT. We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' the sun.
KJ. How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
Makes ill deeds done! Hads't not thou been by,
2 H 4. O God! that one might read the book of fate.
H 5. God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.
Cor. These eyes are not the same I wore in Rome.
JC. My heart doth joy that yet in all my life
I found no man but he was true to me.
AC. Fall not a tear, I say; one of them rates
All that is won and lost: give me a kiss.
KL. You do me wrong, to take me out o' the grave.
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Cym. False to his bed! What is it, to be false?
To lie in watch there, and to think on him?

M. What hands are here? Ha! they pluck out
mine eyes.
H. I do not set my life at a pin's fee;
And, for my soul, what can it do to that?
RJ. O then, I see, Queen Mab hath been with you.
O. Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will
rust them.

The following are examples of passages consisting mainly of monosyllabic lines:

I

King. This ring, you say, was yours?
Dian. Ay, my good lord.
King. Where did you buy it, or who gave it you?
Dian. It was not given me, nor I did not buy it.
King. Who lent it you?
Dian. It was not lent me neither.
King. Where did you find it, then?
Dian. I found it not.
King. If it were yours by none of all these ways,
How could you give it him?
Dian. I never gave it him.
King. This ring was mine: I gave it his first wife.
Dian. It might be yours, or hers, for aught I know.
All's well that ends well, v. iii. 271.

II

Oliv. I prithee, tell me what thou think'st of me.
Vio. That you do think you are not what you are.
Oliv. If I think so, I think the same of you.
Vio. Then think you right: I am not what I am.
Oliv. I would you were as I would have you be!
Vio. Would it be better, madam, than I am?
I wish it might, for now I am your fool.
Twelfth Night, III. i. 150.

III

Nurse. Fie, how my bones ache ! what a jaunt have I had !
Jul. I would thou hadst my bones, and I thy news.
Nay, come, I pray thee, speak : good, good nurse, speak.
Nurse. Jesu, what haste ? can you not stay awhile ?
Do you not see that I am out of breath ?
Jul. How art thou out of breath, when thou hast breath
To say to me that thou art out of breath ?
Romeo and Juliet, II. v. 26.

Record of Plays

In this record I have ignored some of the plays, in order to confine the inquiry to what may be called the unmitigated Shakespeare. In dealing with the remaining plays I have given the number of monosyllabic lines of five accents, both those in blank verse and those in rhyme. And I have recorded also the percentage of these lines in the total of blank-verse lines of five accents in each play, this total being that given by Fleay as revised by him in Ingleby's *Shakespeare, the Man and his Book.*[1] In counting the monosyllabic lines I used the " Universal " edition of Shakespeare (Warne & Co.), as its print is somewhat larger than that of the " Globe."

[1] The reader interested in this matter should ignore the figures given in Fleay's *Shakespeare Manual*, 1876, p. 135.

I have not attempted to deal fully with the rhymed lines; but an experiment with three plays (*MV*, *TN*, *MM*) showed that the percentage of monosyllabic lines in Fleay's total of rhymed lines in these plays is 10·6, and that they often occur in a couplet ending a scene.

	Number of Monosyllabic blank-verse lines.	Percentage.	Monosyllabic Rhymed lines.
T.	114	8·2	5
TGV	97	6·8	2
MM.	95	6·4	5
CE.	90	7·7	26
MA.	56	9·06	2
LLL.	36	5·8	96
MND.	61	8·3	67
MV.	145	7·7	10
AY.	82	9·4	4
AW.	83	7·05	42
TN.	55	7·59	11
WT.	152	7·8	3
KJ.	189	7·8	24
R 2.	141	6·4	71
1 *H* 4.	119	7·6	4
2 *H* 4.	120	8·4	5
H 5.	72	3·7	8
R 3.	223	6·8	9
TC.	98	4·7	28
Cor.	172	7·1	6
RJ.	202	9·8	56
JC.	166	7·6	5
M.	136	8·5	18
H.	195	8·2	11
KL.	180	8·6	5
O.	233	9·7	8
AC.	201	7·7	2
Cym.	215	8·4	17

The following shows the order of the plays in regard to the prevalence of monosyllabic blank-verse lines :

RJ.	9·8	*MV.*	7·7
O.	9·7	*AC.*	7·7
AY.	9·4	1 *H* 4.	7·6
MA.	9·06	*JC.*	7·6
KL.	8·6	*TN.*	7·59
M.	8·5	*Cor.*	7·1
2 *H* 4.	8·4	*AW.*	7·05
Cym.	8·4	*R* 3.	6·8
MND.	8·3	*TG.*	6·8
T.	8·2	*R* 2.	6·4
H.	8·2	*MM.*	6·4
KJ.	7·8	*LLL.*	5·8
WT.	7·8	*TC.*	4·7
CE.	7·7	*H* 5.	3·7

NOTES

The Histories, on the whole, have lower percentages than the Comedies and Tragedies. Five of the eight Tragedies have high percentages. The following plays are near one another both in date and in percentages: *AY* and *MA* ; *KL* and *M* ; *T* and *WT* ; *TGV*, *R* 3, *R* 2.

We may now ask : In what kind of passage, and in what kind of speech, is the monosyllabic line frequent or rare ?

The main answer is that it tends to be frequent in animated dialogue, whether serious, commonplace, or comic, and perhaps specially frequent when the

speeches are short; and that it is, on the whole, infrequent in more or less long speeches (whether soliloquies or not), and perhaps specially infrequent when they convey information to the audience concerning a " situation " or a character. But when a long speech is animated by the movement of thought or imagination or passion, the monosyllabic line may be frequent.

The rarity of these lines in passages mainly conveying information may be illustrated from the opening scenes in some of the plays. I took at random *CE*, *MM*, *R* 2, 1 *H* 4, *H* 5, *R* 3. The first scenes in these plays have 36 monosyllabic lines in a total of 814 lines; *i.e.* a percentage of only 4·4.

Instances of the frequency of monosyllabic lines in long speeches of a certain kind may be found in *Hamlet* and *Othello*. Hamlet's soliloquy, " How all occasions do inform against me," has six in thirty-five complete lines; and the soliloquy, " O what a rogue and peasant slave am I," has seven in fifty-four. Othello's soliloquy, " It is the cause," has five in twenty-one; and again the speech, " Behold, I have a weapon," has three in twenty-one. But there is much animation or passion in all these speeches.

It may be worth while to record here the result of an earlier experiment, made to test a vague impression that decidedly long speeches have exceptionally few monosyllabic lines. For this purpose I

took a "long" speech to be one of thirty-five, or more, lines. I then ascertained the total of the lines contained in the whole of these "long" speeches in the plays dealt with, and also the number and percentage of monosyllabic lines in this total. The percentage proved to be five.

That this percentage is very low the reader will see if he refers to the list of the plays,[1] where he will find that only two of them have a percentage so low, while four of them have one of nine, seven one of eight, ten one of seven, and four one of six. The remainder are *Love's Labour's Lost* (5·8), *Troilus and Cressida* (4·7), and *Henry V.* (3·7).

Appendix

The following list records the percentage of monosyllabic lines in plays, or parts of plays, of the time of Shakespeare and later. Where, as too often, the edition of a play has not numbered lines the percentage is only approximate.

Marlowe	*Edward II.* - - - - - -	7·4
Greene	*James IV.* - - - - - - -	7·2
Beaumont and Fletcher	*Philaster*, v. - - - - - -	10
Jonson	*Sejanus*, i. - - - - - - -	6·2
Webster	*White Devil*, i. ii. - - - - -	7·3
Massinger	*Duke of Milan*, iii. i. - - - -	3·3

[1] It should be observed that this list deals only with blank-verse lines, while the "long" speeches dealt with in the "experiment" may contain rhymed lines as well as blank. But I have no reason to think that this difference is important.

FORD	*'Tis pity she's a whore*, II. iii. v. - -	7·3
DRYDEN	*All for Love*, I. - - - - - -	7
CONGREVE	*Mourning Bride*, I. - - - - -	6·6
COLERIDGE	*Remorse*, I. - - - - - - -	7
SHELLEY	*The Cenci*, I. - - - - - -	8·6
BYRON	*Cain*, I. - - - - - - -	12
TENNYSON	*Becket*, V. - - - - - - -	14·1
BROWNING	*Strafford*, V. ii. - - - - -	13·4
SWINBURNE	*Mary Stuart*, I. i. - - - - -	19
BRIDGES	*Achilles in Scyros*, 1-195, and 616-787 -	13·1
YEATS	*The Countess Cathleen*, I. and II. - -	13·6

It will be seen that, as with the record of Poems, the highest percentages are to be found in works of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

PROSE

ENGLISH AND OTHER LANGUAGES

The object of this record is two-fold: (1) to ascertain the proportion of monosyllabic and of other words in passages of English and of some foreign languages; (2) to ascertain the *number* of words, monosyllabic and other, in these passages.

The method is to compare a passage in a foreign language with an English translation of it.

It is obvious that a short passage cannot safely be taken as adequately representing the characteristics of a language or an author; but it may be of use for the particular purpose of this inquiry, and I may add that, in all cases, the passage has been chosen after a comparison with several others. The English translations are not my own.

	Mono. words.	The rest.	Total words.	Percentage Mono.	Percentage rest.
THUCYDIDES - - -	37	53			
GREEK TESTAMENT -	19	63			
	56	116	172	32·5	67·4
English Translation -	104	52			
	89	25			
	193	77	270	71·1	28·5
	262				

	Mono. words.	The rest.	Total words.	Percentage Mono.	Percentage rest.
TACITUS - - -	12	50			
VULGATE - - -	30	73			
	42	123	165	25·4	74·4
English Translation -	79	32			
	122	32			
	201	64	265	75·8	24·1
DANTE - - - -	42	87			
BOCCACCIO - - -	33	74			
	75	161	236	31·7	68·2
English Translation -	118	40			
	98	26			
	216	66	282	76·5	23·4
MONTAIGNE - - -	68	32			
PASCAL - - - -	53	32			
	121	64	185	65·4	34·5
English Translation -	84	32			
	75	32			
	159	64	223	71·3	28·6
GOETHE - - - -	51	47			
LESSING - - -	51	37			
	102	84	186	54·8	45·1
English Translation -	64	38			
	74	25			
	138	63	201	68·6	31·3

NOTES

(1) The percentage of monosyllabic words in the total of foreign words in this record is 41·9; their percentage in the total of English words 72·8.

As regards this percentage the order of the languages, from highest to lowest, is English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Latin. The Greek and Italian are very near one another; the French and German not so.

It will be seen that the very low percentage of Latin is due to the passage of Tacitus. I therefore examined four other passages in his *Histories*, and found the percentage in them, taken together, to be 16·4. The percentage in some passages of Cicero was 21·1, which is still decidedly lower than those of the other languages. A passage of Livy gave a percentage of 17·1.

(2) *Number* of words. It appears at once from the record that, in general, the number of words is much larger in the English translations than in the foreign originals. The following are the details:

	Total.	Foreign.	Percentage.	English.	Percentage.
Greek-English -	442	172	38·9	270	61·08
Latin-English -	430	165	38·3	265	61·6
Italian-English -	518	236	45·5	282	54·4
French-English -	408	185	45·3	223	54·6
German-English -	387	186	48·06	201	51·9
	2185	944	43·2	1241	56·7

It will be seen that, as regards the total of words in the passages used, the English superiority in

number of words is almost the same in relation to Greek and to Latin, and again in relation to Italian and to French; that this superiority is decidedly largest in relation to Greek and Latin, and smallest in relation to German; and that, in this matter, there is only a minute difference between Greek and Latin, and between Italian and French.

Postscript. When I had brought this work to an end, it struck me that it might be worth while to see if I could with ease write a few lines in which there was no word of more than one syllable; and the lines that I write now seem to show that I could have done this with ease if I could have thought of a word of one syllable which meant the same as the word "syllable."

This paragraph, which *was* written "with ease," contains seventy-seven words, all of which, except "syllable," are of one syllable.

ENGLISH AUTHORS

The following is a record of the monosyllabic and non-monosyllabic words in passages taken from the works of authors of the seventeenth and following centuries.

In preparing this record I naturally chose such passages as I thought characteristic of the authors; and, if the result in any degree surprised me, I examined other passages. But my main interest

was not with the particular authors, but with the *total* result.

	Mono. words.	Other words.		Mono. words.	Other words.
HOOKER -	70	27	BURKE - -	68	30
BACON - -	77	30	AUSTEN - -	67	27
CLARENDON -	73	29	SCOTT - -	69	37
MILTON - -	78	30	LANDOR - -	66	28
BUNYAN -	78	25	LAMB - -	75	32
DEFOE - -	96	11	CARLYLE -	84	33
ADDISON -	79	24	RUSKIN - -	70	18
STEELE - -	73	33	MACAULAY -	71	36
RICHARDSON -	74	32	THACKERAY -	68	22
FIELDING -	71	27	ARNOLD, M. -	70	29
STERNE - -	73	18			
GIBBON - -	60	41	Total - -	1756	681
JOHNSON -	66	43	Percentage	72·05	27·9
GOLDSMITH -	80	19			

It will be seen that the percentage of monosyllabic words in this record is almost identical with the 72·8 of the English words in the record for English and foreign languages.

In the present list the higher and the lower percentages would be found, on the whole, where we should expect them. Defoe has the highest, and next come Sterne, Goldsmith, Addison, and Bunyan. On the other hand the passages from Gibbon and Johnson have percentages of only 60 ; and some, taken later, from Hume, Bentham, and Butler, fall short of 70.

In experimenting with Burke I found great differences in different passages, the number of monosyllabic words being sometimes high. I owe to a friend a short extract containing 42 in a total of

46. But this, unlike the passage used in my record, occurs in a speech.

The comparatively low percentage, about 65, in the passage from Scott surprised me; but I found it fairly constant, and that even in passages of rapid dialogue. I may add that, in dealing with novelists, I avoided such passages, as they naturally tend (as in drama) to a free use of small words.

After completing this record I looked at some authors earlier than Hooker, with this result: More, 53 and 25; Latimer, 72 and 19; Ascham, 74 and 16; Knox, 70 and 13; Foxe, 75 and 26. The percentage of monosyllabic words in the total is a little more than 77, higher than that in the main list.

The following are figures for passages in authors of the nineteenth century not dealt with in the list: Dickens, 84 and 20; George Eliot, 76 and 31; Newman, 92 and 23; Emerson, 81 and 18; Stevenson, 82 and 24. The percentage of monosyllabic words in the total is about 78.

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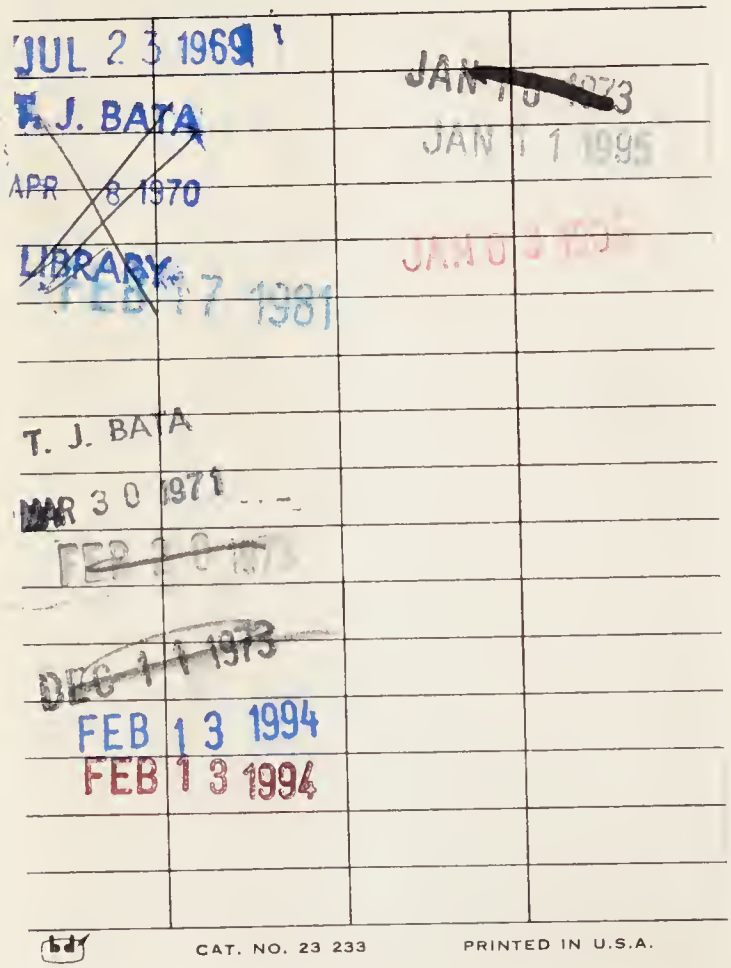

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